Dear Sir, I've just finished your latest installment to the Korean War Project ... I felt obligated to send you a short note to thank you for your service to our country. I am a Captain with the US Army stationed in Seoul, ROK. While stationed here I have become more interested in the Korean War and came across your memoirs ... on the internet. Yours is a fascinating acount of small unit leadership and the truely heroic service of our military during the Korean War... it is an honor for me to share the uniform that you once wore.
Captain T L. M
United States Army

I simply wanted to tell you thanks for sharing your experiences in the Korean War. ...you have had an impact on my life. My father committed suicide when I was 3. I grew up hating and resenting him. He was an alcoholic. I couldn't understand why a man with 6 children could neglect his family. ...I learned recently that my father fought at ... Pork Chop Hill. Apparently he was one of .. few survivors from his platoon. He was a SFC in the Army....5th Cav 1st Div. ...fighting was so intense and close-up, that when he would throw a grenade the Korean's would throw it right back. He had to hold a grenade too long and it blew part of his arm off. Mother said he had to go a couple days without proper treatment. ...reading about your experiences made me feel like I was possibly reading about my father and his experiences. I don't hate him anymore. I think I understand a little better what he was struggling with. A great big THANKS.
L B

(Continued on inside back cover)

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Waiting For The Blessed Light Of Dawn

A Diary of the Korean War

Ted Hofsiss

"Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive..."

Lines Composed a Few Miles
Above Tintern Abbey

William Wordsworth

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Waiting For The Blessed Light Of Dawn

A Diary of the Korean War

Copyright 1997
Ted Hofsiss
First Printing 1999

Printed by: Humphrey Printing Co. Inc.
1602 Midwestern Parkway
P O Box 5025
Wichita Falls, TX 76302

Cover by Ted Hofsiss
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Published by: RoadRunner Publishing
Rt 1 Box 67
Forestburg, TX 76239-9717
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Dedicated to:

Laura, my devoted wife

PFC. George J. Malool
Killed in Action
14September1950

PFC. William R. Geraghty
PFC. George Sorenson
MSGT. William Finner
Killed in action
15September1950

Cpl. Muriel G. Brown
Killed in action
28February1951

Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. John 15:13

Foreword

The Korean War has been called "the first war we lost." General of the Army Omar Bradley said that a major conflict for the future of that tiny nation would be "the wrong war, at the wrong place, at the wrong time and with the wrong enemy." In my opinion, it was far from either.

Korea was the first war that we won against communism. The North Korean's attempt to conquer their southern neighbor was the first overt attack of a communist state against another nation. The resolve of the United States to resist and defeat communism was tested for the first time on that peninsula. The American fighting man, and woman, passed that test.

In spite of political constraints, limited objectives, and often incompetent, irresponsible command and policy decisions, the courage, spirit, fortitude and valor of the American soldiers, marines, airmen and sailors remained unwavering and unbowed, as it has for over 200 years.

Many volumes have been written telling the military history of the war in Korea. There is no need for another. But this is not a history of the war or the vast geopolitical machinations behind it. This is the story of men in war and one man in particular, my father. It is the story of friendships and love and combat. It is the story of what the hell of combat does to men, both to their bodies and, more significantly, to their minds and souls.

The Republic of Korea is now a thriving, independent nation. If it were not for the sacrifices of American families their fate would be the same as the starving, oppressed millions to the north. The South Korean people still remember and appreciate what America and 21 other countries did for them and their

country.

Osan Air Base is just a few miles from the site of America's first blood in Korea. Before I left to spend a year there I asked my father how to do it. How do you leave your family behind and go where your country sends you? How do you endure the hardship of those months away from home and loved ones? His answer was simple. "You just do it."

I arrived in Korea in December 1995, some 45 years after my father. My first reaction on seeing the steep hills and mountains of that country was one of awe and amazement. I wondered, and still wonder, how on earth those men had fought a war in that punishing terrain. They had lived, fought, bled and far too many died in those mountains through three bitterly cold winters and four blistering, humid summers.

Compared to my father's experience I lived in luxury during my tour of duty. I cannot imagine the kind of courage and devotion it took to leave a beautiful, new bride and a bright, hopeful future to travel halfway around the world, not knowing if he would ever return. How do you shove the fear far enough down inside you? How do you keep your sanity through night after night of attacks by thousands of screaming waves of Communist Koreans and Chinese? How do you keep from curling up into a sobbing, trembling ball during a mortar or artillery barrage? How do you advance into withering enemy fire while your closest friends are blown to pieces around you? How do you carry on when every instinct tells you to turn and run, to get away? The answer is not at all simple. "You just do it."

I am, and will forever be, in humble admiration of

the courage and sacrifice of all our Korean War veterans, especially my father. I hope that after reading his story you will feel the same.

Sgt James D. Hofsiss
United States Air Force
May 6, 1999

" ...Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I, send me!" Isaiah 6:8

08August1950

It's almost dawn, but I can't sleep. The train is roaring westward across Wyoming, taking me away from the woman I love, and the life we planned. My thoughts turn back to yesterday evening, when Laura and I parted.

Young men dressed in clean, starched fatigue uniforms stand in front of the first barrack on King Company Street. Over the doorway of the building is a sign, "Third Platoon, King Company." Most of the soldiers are smoking a final cigarette before being ordered into formation. A few are passing through the doorway and down the wooden steps. They carry all their gear out of the building. Duffel bags, combat packs, gas masks, rifles, helmets, are propped up in the street. The piles of equipment mark each soldier's place in the platoon formation. Down the street, the men of the other three platoons of King Company are doing the same.

Our 1939 Ford station wagon is parked in front of the barrack. Everything Laura and I own, except for my GI issue, is packed in the rear of the wagon. It's time for me to get my gear out of the barrack and take my place in the street with the rest of the 3rd Platoon. Time for Laura to head for her home in Texas, where she'll wait for me.

Laura stares straight ahead into the last light of the sun, as it sets behind Cheyenne Mountain.

Her strong hands grip the steering wheel. This Texas girl, with all the good traits of a Texan -friendly, happy, confident- is frightened. She is frightened of the unknown; of the circumstances that are about to wrench us apart, perhaps forever. She looks toward the men of the 3rd Platoon standing and sitting in front of the barrack.

Her glance takes in all of them.

Her wave is gentle, as if she would touch each of them, one last time.

On an ordinary evening our friends crowd around the old wagon, joking, talking about plans for the weekend. They call her "Tex" or "Sam"; nicknames they've given her because of her home state, and because she fits in so well with a bunch of GIs.

This isn't an ordinary evening. The usual, the ordinary for us, has been blown away in that first artillery barrage triggered by the North Korean Army on the morning of 25June1950.

Pretending they don't see her anguish, our friends wave to her. A few walk to the wagon, pat her arm, and whisper goodbye.

"So long, Tex!"

"See ya, Sam."

"Take care of yourself."

I sit on the passenger side, turned toward her, gazing at her profile, trying to imprint her strong, lovely face on my memory.

"I've got to go Hon," I whisper.

Her grip tightens on the steering wheel until her knuckles whiten. Rocking slightly, she stares through the windshield

"I've got to go," My voice is hoarse with dread and sorrow

"Why can't they leave us alone? Why can't we just one?" she asks no one. Her voice is tight with fear.

at is growing in me as well. Wild ideas flash

through my mind. We could run away, hide in the mountains, or even somewhere in the Texas canyon country; anywhere to relieve this feeling of having lost all control over our lives.

The knot, just below my stomach is getting bigger, harder. I open my mouth to speak, then close it and swallow. My throat is dry. This is madness, but to run would be greater madness. I clench my teeth as I push those crazy thoughts from my mind and struggle to accept what is happening to us.

Control of our lives, our future, is caught up in a wild storm of war in a small Asian country; a storm of fire, shrapnel, and death.

I put my hand on her shoulder. "Please!" I beg. "Kiss me, then drive away!"

I leave the station wagon and walk to the driver's side, trying to keep my eyes on her as long as I can. I lean into the open window.

"Take care of yourself! I love you with all my heart!" My voice cracks as despair grips me.

She touches my cheek and whispers, for my ears alone, "I love you, darling! Please be careful! Come back to me!"

We kiss! I feel my heart will be in continous pain until we can repeat that kiss.

Strength seems to pass between us as she grips my hand and smiles through her tears. I can let her go now.

I turn toward the barrack. As my foot touches the bottom step, I hear the station wagon turn the corner.

She'll be alright. She is, in fact, the stronger one.

Biting my lip, I race up the steps. As soon as I'm

inside the empty building, I pull off my glasses and rub my face against my sleeve.

First Sergeant Fisk blows his whistle. Time for us to put on our combat gear, shoulder our weapons, and find our places in the company formation.

We are carrying too much equipment to march, so we move at route step to a railroad siding here on the military reservation of Camp Carson, Colorado. A train of pullman cars wait to carry King Company and the rest of the 3rd Battalion to Fort Ord, California; then on to a troopship for the voyage to South Korea. It's a sad way to leave the place that has been home to most of us for the past eighteen months, but we're at least going to make the first leg of our journey in style.

The porter is calling us to breakfast. I leave my seat in the gently rocking railroad car, and my vision of yesterday.

13August1950

We're crowded into the USS General Pope, a WWII transport. The crew tells us that we are twice as many as the ship was built to carry. Three battalions and several smaller outfits are squeezed like sardines into the holds.

Soon after we hit the open ocean, we begin a roller coaster ride on eight foot ground swells, that soon make most of the troops sick. It seems as if the ship is moving in at least three directions at once.

I had spent many weekends on a small fishing boat in Jamaica Bay, so I thought I might get my sea legs before I got sick. No such luck.

The odor is too much. After moving below deck to bed down, the rest of us are sick by dark.

After several days of that, many of us decide to sleep on deck. I'm surprised that it's allowed.

After a few days the ground swells disappear, and are replaced by waves of different heights; the aftermath of storms in other parts of the ocean. The captain maintains full speed no matter how high the waves get, and the old tub shows the strain. When we're below we can feel the vibration and clatter of everything that isn't bolted tight.

The ship's newspaper informs us that the North Koreans have boxed the South Korean Army and US Army units into the Southeast corner of Korea.

18August 1950

I guess we better enjoy this "vacation." We've been told we're heading straight for Pusan. The rumors that had us going to Japan aren't heard any more.

We accuse Malool of starting that rumor because he is spinning a story to his mother that we are heading for Japan. He doesn't want to worry her because she has a bad heart.

We all seem to be talking and acting in a more serious way. We don't need to be told to spend time cleaning our weapons.

The Third Platoon of King Company usually gathers on the forward hatch. There are six of us who have been spending most of our time together here on the ship. There's Vincent "Ike" Iocolano, George Malool, William "Willie" Geraghty, George Sorenson, Muriel Brown and me.

Four of us are from the Northeast. In fact, Ike, Malool, and I come from Brooklyn. Willie is from Jersey City. We four speak nearly the same language.

Sorenson is from Blue Earth, Minnesota. Brown is from Arkansas. They're real nice guys and get along with everybody. I sometimes wonder how they can understand us, but they do. We have a good time hanging around together and kidding each other.

Nothing has been said, but I believe we'll make it a point to check up on each other whenever we can. We have, after all, been together most of our waking hours. We slept near each other in the barrack and in the field, for many months.

We horse around in the showers, and act silly when we have too many beers. That's two for me! We've even the chewing out, and occasionally, the praise of

our sergeants and officers. Now we'll be sharing combat together.

There's nothing "sugar-cookie sweet" about our friendship. We often quarrel, or make each other the butt of practical jokes. Once they nearly brought me to tears by hiding my picture of Laura. They gave it back only after I threatened to pull their gear out on the floor until I found it. We are just as quick to back up one another against anyone outside the group, especially someone outside the company.

We're all still in our teens, but we've been in the Army more than 21 months. We are trained to move in any terrain, and to fight in cold or heat. Nearly every day has been spent slogging through mud, snow, or dust, climbing or rappelling down Colorado's red cliffs, and maneuvering in mock battles. Last January we fought, and survived the worst wild fire in Colorado's history. Ten GIs and four civilians died in that battle.

In spite of our young age, we feel we've learned our craft; at least as much as we can learn from lectures and exercises. Most important, we've learned discipline, and duty. The few young men who didn't, have pretty well been weeded out. Some went the hard way, through the stockade. A few others were discharged as unfit for military service. The rest of us are proud of our regiment, of our officers, and of ourselves. The 14th Regimental Combat Team is trained to climb mountains and ski, and then to fight as infantry in any country or weather.

The typhoon hit without warning.

The ship's loudspeaker tells us the waves and wind are only the beginning. We are ordered below decks. We

begin to wonder if Korea is going to be our destination after all. We know we're in trouble when the ship's crew empty their stomachs in the head, along with us landlubbers.

The few people who have to move about on deck to get to their compartments or to deliver messages, have to use life lines. There is nothing for the rest of us to do except be sick, and worry.

The captain maintains the speed we've been making all along. Some of the men have gone to officers' country for various reasons, and they all come back soaked to the skin, saying that the waves are higher than the bridge.

The ship climbs to the top of a wave, tips over and slides down the other side. As it balances on the top of a wave, the spinning propellors shake the ship until it seems the rivets will pop. As we slide down, the bow digs into the back side of the next wave. A shudder runs through the ship again, as it tries to shake off the weight of the water pushing it down.

The creaking of plates in the decks and the bulkheads, the anchor slamming against the bow, and the wind whistling through the cables attached to the masts and the cargo booms, make us think the ship is about to sink. To add to our misery, the howling wind blows water into the ventilators keeping the air below decks damp and foul.

Many of us decide to heed the wisdom of the old sailors and try to keep our stomachs full. This proves to be more of a problem than might be expected.

I stand in the galley on the General Pope. As I carry

my food tray to the waist-high tables, (we eat standing up) I wonder if the old salts know what they are talking about. The first bite isn't so bad. Then the old ship plunges down a mountainous wave. The trays all slide to the other end of the 30 foot table. As the ship rights herself, and passes level again, my tray returns. There is more in it than when it slid away. Now it has the contents of some poor soul's stomach on top of my food.

I've always had a queasy stomach. This is too much for me. I'll have the dry heaves, but I won't eat again until we're out of the typhoon.

20August1950

There is so little to do on this ship. We talk, we read, we smoke, and we sleep.

Every day I add a few lines to my letter to Laura. What is there to tell her? I wish I could be home? I'm scared? I miss her so much my chest aches just from thinking of the words that will tell her how I feel.

My life didn't have anything special about it until Laura came into it. I was just a skinny, four-eyed kid who was lucky enough to get out of Brooklyn, and into the dairy country of the Catskill Mountains for four summers. When I found out there was something in this world besides concrete and cockroaches, I decided I wanted to live in the country. I loved the idea of spending my life as a farmer. I hated the city so much I joined the army to get away, permanently. The recruiter said I would be sent to heavy equipment school. Ha! I was really dumb, but everything had turned out just right.

I met Laura, and fell in love with her beauty, her Texas drawl, and her smile that makes my knees weak and softens my heart. She has a confident way of approaching almost every situation. Not to mention, she loves me!

We had already begun to dream about buying a farm in Texas. There were only 8 months left on my enlistment when we married. We planned to go back to Texas and eventually find a farm to build into a home for us and the family we would have. We felt we were still on our honeymoon until the lousy Korean Reds started this war. To add to our misery, President Truman added a year to my enlistment.

22August1950

No more rumors. We land in Pusan tomorrow.

The General Pope is a tough ship after all. After almost 24 hours in the typhoon, we break into bright sunlight, still afloat. The anchor has gouged a hole in the bow, but the captain still maintains full speed.

We're allowed topside again, and some of us withstand the spray from the waves, in exchange for fresh air. The 3rd Platoon lays claim to the forward hatch again.

Most of us have brought all our gear on deck for our last night aboard ship. The deck is littered with rifles, gear, and soldiers.

Tomorrow we dock at Pusan, putting an end to the most boring, frustrating time of our lives. Before this trip, "Hurry up and wait" has always applied to short periods of time. This is ridiculous! For thirteen days we've been virtually immobilized. There hasn't even been room for physical training. We are ready for this trip to be over. Anything -even combat- will be better than this.

It's almost dark. We are steaming at full speed toward Pusan with the ship's lights off. There is a new rumor, that a North Korean or Russian submarine is cruising just outside of Pusan Harbor, waiting for us. It may be more than just a rumor. We've been ordered not to smoke on deck until daylight.

We all know that no one is going to get through this by himself. All of our training has been about teamwork. Everybody needs to have someone looking out for him. We know that each of us will watch out for the other five. The unspoken pact will have a few problems. Malool is

in the 2nd squad. Geraghty, Brown, and I are in the 1st squad. Ike is bazooka gunner in the 4th squad. Sorenson is runner for our platoon headquarters section.

Muriel Brown is my assistant gunner on the BAR. We'll be watching out for each other all the time.

24August1950

We arrived at Pusan this morning. We're still restricted to a fenced compound on the dock, but at least there are dry wooden planks under our feet. The dock we're on is covered with a tin roof. Every bit of the battalion's gear has finally been unloaded. We're ready to move.

Pusan, the "Pearl of the Orient"; what a place this is! It stinks worse than the General Pope or anything else I've ever smelled, and I've done some trompin' around in manure piles.

I lived the first sixteen years of my life just a couple of blocks from Newtown Creek. It separates part of Greenpoint, Brooklyn, from Queens, New York. The creek is so thick with oil and sewage, the water hardly moves when tugs and barges push their way through it. I always thought nothing could smell worse than Newtown Creek. I was wrong! Pusan smells worse! Last night our noses told us we had arrived long before we could see land.

We've lain on this dock in platoon formation all afternoon. There is no breeze and the hot air under the metal roof is suffocating.

As the day wears on, we become sleepy and thirsty. Finally, late in the day a lister bag is set up for drinking water. It's the first chance we've had to fill our canteens. I feel pretty smart. I filled my canteen while we were still on board the Pope, so I've had water to sip long after the air on the dock became hot and foul.

I've only been outside the fence once since we landed, and I really don't relish the idea of going again. Just a while ago First Sergeant Fisk sent me and a guy from

the 1st Platoon, to the USO building, about a mile down the street. We were told the detail was for us to get enough writing paper for the whole company.

"All right men, I want you to be very careful. Go straight to the USO building and back. Keep your eyes straight ahead. Don't stop or pay attention to anything you see, and don't speak to any of the local people." Fisk told us in his clipped, no nonsense manner.

You'd have thought he was sending us on some secret mission!

Sergeant Fisk is right! It's like we've been dropped into another world. The houses are made of mud and straw. All the people look miserable, and act very strange. The clothes they wear are nearly the same for everyone. Shoes are made of rice straw twisted into a rope and sewn together as a sandal. Men and women wear white baggy pants held up by a rope of rice straw. A short shirt covers the upper part of the body.

The kids beg for cigarettes, and chocolate, and offer their sisters for sex. They know all the right words and gestures to get their point across, too. We don't linger or get lost.

We also found out why the place smells so bad. There's no plumbing! Men and women just squat in the street without even turning away. When the guy I was with pointed to a dirty old woman reaching up between her legs and mashing between her fingernails whatever she found up there, we put our rifles at high port and double timed back to the wharf.

We finally doze off resting our heads on our duffle bags, wishing we had something softer than wood to put

under our head and our hips.

We have no idea what will happen tomorrow. The only positive thing that has happened so far is a box of C-rations, and letters from home. I guess the letters were flown over, or they came on a fast ship.

I have a very long letter to send to Laura. I started it on the train and finished it today. Of course, I told her that I made corporal, and that the promotion was going to mean a little more money for us. Most of the letter is kind of "weepy." I tell her on just about every page that I miss her night and day. I slept by myself up until the day we were married, and I was missing the closeness of this woman I love more than I love life.

In her first letter she wrote a strange sentence. She said she hoped we would get a pet some day, and hoped the first one would be a boy.

Wow! That jarred me! I wrote back to ask if she was pregnant, or was that just wishful thinking.

25August1950

It was several hours before daylight when a sleep-shattering scream woke everyone on the dock! At the street end of the dock, outside the chain link fence, is a guard shack. The scream came from that direction.

Several ranks of GIs jerk up from a fitful sleep and rush to the fence. We can see through the windows and door of the shack. A man and woman are tied by their wrists to hooks in the wall. Two little boys sit on the floor. Each of them has a rope tied around his neck. The other end is held by a South Korean National Policeman. Another policeman stands near the woman.

We soon find out why she screamed. Her shirt is open and the man is pressing a lighted cigarette to her breast!

Every soldier standing near the fence lets out a roar and rattles the fence. The policeman, probably an officer, turns around and stares at us. He shows no other reaction to our loud protest. I can imagine he wouldn't hesitate if one of us was tied to that hook!

There is another chorus of protest. "Stop that!" "Hey, you can't do that!"

Just as we are getting really mad, a lieutenant comes running up between the fence and the guard shack.

"You men return to your formation! You have no business here!" he shouts.

"Lieutenant did you see what he's doin'" Geraghty shouts back.

The lieutenant repeats his demand that we leave.

A sergeant from Battalion Headquarters appears on our side of the fence.

He backs up the lieutenant, but he is at least one of

our own. "All right men you heard the Lieutenant get back to your formation and get back to sleep."

We grumble and growl, but do as we're told. We are still young and impressionable, and used to obeying orders.

As we turn away a Korean policeman closes the door and begins putting blankets over the windows.

I shiver in fear and disgust, as I try to accept what I've seen. To tell the truth, I think we are all frightened by the torture, and the sure knowledge, that if we survive to return home to our families, the world will never be the same for us again! We sit and talk in groups well into the morning.

We're here to save the likes of those guys?

26August1950

We heard a rumor today that the man and woman, and the two boys had been caught with stolen hand grenades. All four of them were shot this morning. All this, and we're not even on land yet!

First Sergeant Fisk stands in front of King Company and blows his whistle. "Atten'hut!"

He waits impatiently as we sluggishly stand and come to attention.

A major from battalion headquarters walks up beside the First Sergeant.

He speaks loudly without shouting. "Men, you are to take your clothing issue to the rear of the formation and place it in piles according to the nomenclature of each piece. All khaki shirts in one pile, OD trousers in one pile, undershirts in one pile, and so on."

He pauses as grumbling spreads through the company.

"Quiet! You're at attention!" the First Sergeant barks, as only Sergeant Fisk can.

He is a small man; trim in every sense of the word. His voice can only be described as a bark.

The major continues, "You will keep all of your combat gear, plus one change of underwear, two pairs of socks, and shaving gear. If you choose to keep any personal items, remember you're going to have to carry them. One correction, you will deposit your gas masks in a pile also."

The First Sergeant turns and salutes the major.

Turning back to the company, he barks again. "Platoon sergeants, see that the order is carried out."

Just about everybody has something to say about the stupidity of carrying our complete GI issue half way around the world to dump it here on the dock in Pusan. We drag our duffel bags to the rear of the formation, and add our clean, carefully folded clothes to the piles that have been started.

This is a major emotional event for us. As we learned what was acceptable in our dress, most of us bought jump boots to replace our combat boots. All uniform shirts, jackets, and pants, even our fatigues, have been tailored to a skin tight fit. We even iron them ourselves to be sure they look right. Now our money, and our pride in our uniforms is to be dumped unceremoniously on this filthy dock, to be stolen or trashed.

Ike notices Sergeant Krause, my squad leader, bending over his gas mask. He is doing something to it before throwing it on the pile.

"What ya doin' Sarge?" Ike asks.

"I'm cuttin' a couple of rubber rings off this air tube. I'm gonna' put 'em 'round my dog tags so they won't rattle." Krause mutters.

"Looks like a good idea. Can we have permission to do it, too?"

Several of us gather around Krause.

"Don't be an ass!" Krause hisses. "There are some things ya do without askin'. This is destroyin' government property, but it could save your life! I'm keepin' the bag too. It's great for carryin' grenades."

"Right Sarge! You guys got that? Clam up! Get it done and get back in formation." Corporal Huckabee

pushes the squad along to each pile of clothes and back to the platoon formation.

Not another word is said about cutting rings from gas mask air hoses, but none of the 3rd Platoon's tags rattle when we lay down on the dock.

"What about the stuff that's ours?" someone asks.

"Put it all in your duffel bag and lock it up. It'll be stored and delivered to us later." Platoon Sergeant Finner instructs us.

"You're kiddin'!" Geraghty growls. "We ain't never gonna' see this stuff again!"

"Shut up and do as you're told!" Platoon Sergeant Finner roars.

The Battalion Sergeant Major blows his whistle. Saddle up time.

"Man, I'm glad to be movin.' Anything will be better than this!" Ike grunts, as he hitches up his pack harness.

We carry our combat packs, weapons, field gear, and change of underwear; nothing else. I hate leaving some of my stuff. Oh well, I can carry everything I need. Water, cigarettes, lighter, writing paper, and Laura's picture. Most of us have at least one meal left from our C-rations. I'm carrying my pipe, too. There will be tobacco in the PX rations and no one else in the platoon smokes a pipe.

Every time I think about Laura, I miss her more. I'm beginning to realize how important she is to the way I feel about myself, and my life in general. The packet of letters I got was great, but my mind keeps going back to her. We were having such a good time, and were getting to know

each other with hardly any problems; kind of slow and easy.

We march off the wharf to the cadence count of First Sergeant Fisk. King Company's CO (Commanding Officer), barrel chested Captain Ralph Curfman, marches several paces in front of the first rank of four platoon leaders. Sergeant Finner is in that spot for our platoon. We came to Korea without an officer for platoon leader. The rest of the formation is ranks of sixteen men; four from each platoon of King Company. We march facing straight ahead, trying to look grim and purposeful; all the while looking out the corner of our eyes at this strange place, and the people we're here to help. We fill the entire street, forcing some Koreans to move against the walls of the clay and stone buildings. Some of us are forced to walk on what is in the shallow gutters.

The Koreans watch us as we pass, but make no move or sound to cheer us on.

I have very little understanding of our situation. Doubts and fears flit in and out of my mind. I know that all those games and exercises in Colorado, and other places, were meant to prepare us for this moment. As I march shoulder to shoulder with my fellow soldiers, I begin to feel stronger. I'm surrounded by men, however young and untested, who I know better than I know my own family. Our company CO is a man I trust completely. Maybe we'll be able to carry out this "police action" without too many of us getting hurt.

I remember World War II. The American people put everything they had into defeating Japan and Germany. We made a slow start in that war, too. We'll only have to hold

on for a little while, then look out North Korea, the United States will crush you with everything its got!

At the rail station we load onto passenger cars. The trip to Taegu doesn't take long, but we spend a long time in the rail yard while the engineer moves the locomotive to the rear of the train.

As we move out of Taegu, someone spots four girls bathing in a large ditch near the railroad track. They are full grown, naked, and obviously willing to greet us. They squeal and wave, jumping up and down while just about every GI on that side of the train hoots and whistles. There is a near riot when the guys on the other side of the car find out what we're looking at and try to squeeze up to a window.

We back up the track for several miles. Before we get to the end of the line we begin to see shell holes and burned out shacks. A large shell hole filled with broken ties and twisted rails puts a period to our train ride.

I think the engineer knew what we would find here, and figured he can get back to Taegu faster by going forward, after he dumps us.

Soon after we unload all our gear, including ammunition, we march along the track toward the Naktong River. There are no roads, no buildings; only hills that are terraced near the bottom and bare and rocky near the top. Foot trails are everywhere.

The girls, and any attempts at jokes are forgotten, and our minds go back to wondering what is going to happen next. Where are the troops? Where is the front line?

As we form up to walk on either side of the track,

ammunition cases are opened and each man is given a bandoleer; 5 clips of 8 rounds, 40 rounds total. Brown and I are given 5 additional bandoleers for the BAR clips.

This must be war! We aren't told to keep a written record of ammo received, nor are we told to carry the ammo cases with us to collect the brass cartridges.

We're supposed to be on the front line, but all I can see is our platoon on this hill beside the railroad track, and the rest of the company next to us, across the track. I can't see anyone on the other hills around us. The Naktong River is barely in sight through the afternoon heat waves. Rumor has it that the North Korean Army comes across the river at night. They have even built bridges under the water.

Yesterday, we were told that we are now the 3rd Battalion of the 5th Cavalry Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division. I don't know if I like not being part of the 14th Regimental Combat Team anymore. We were taught to be fiercely proud of our outfit. We were told we're different, better than the ordinary ground pounder. We can ski, climb mountains, and fight in places other outfits can't even go. From the look of the country, we may have to live up to that boast. At least we're still a battalion.

King Company is responsible for more than a mile of the front line. Even I know tactics better than that! We're covering only two little hills. As soon as the rest of the battalion detrained they struck out to the north. We lost sight of them before we arrived at our hills, here by the railroad.

Platoon Sergeant Finner assigns Ike, Brown, and me to be a forward listening post. We're almost 100 yards

downhill from the rest of the platoon, right next to the tracks. We have a field phone to talk to the platoon CP (Command Post). Ike has his Bazooka and I have my BAR. Brown and I feel that the enemy is going to pay if they're going to get us. We carry 10 BAR clips between us; 200 rounds, plus 40 rounds for Brown's M1.

I figure Sergeant Finner has it in for me because I went to Captain Curfman and got overnight passes for the married guys after he had told us there would be no more passes unless he gave them to us. He said we had no right to that kind of privilege when the rest of the men had to stay in camp. Of course, he didn't care, because his wife wasn't in Colorado Springs. Finner transferred into King Company only a few days before we shipped out. Our Platoon Leader, transferred out just before the war started.

The problem Sergeant Finner and I had over the passes, is an example of why we love Captain Curfman so much. He and the other officers and noncoms wanted to go home at night. The Captain would feel he had to let the married men in the lower ranks go too. If we were ordered to stay in camp at night, Curfman would have ordered everyone in the company to stay also. He would have stayed, too. He was that kind of man.

I sure do miss Sergeant Quimby. For more than a year, he was our Platoon Sergeant. He helped train us to be a fighting unit. We don't know what to expect from Finner!

I'll show Sergeant Finner! He won't have any cause to chew me out. What Sergeant Finner wants from Corporal Hofsiss, Finner gets, no argument!

The sun has set, but it's still hot. We've sweated

through our fatigues. We aren't allowed to take off any of our clothes, not even our boots. Maybe we'll dry out by daylight.

I can hear artillery off to the right and left. Tracers are ricocheting into the sky all along the river. Somebody's gettin' it tonight.

It's so dark we can't see a thing! If I think about something else, I'll be all right. I'll dream that Laura is here beside me and we're lying in the grass in the Garden of the Gods, looking at the stars. Sometimes it seems that we were married only a few days before I left; not nearly three and a half months.

30August1950

The Third Platoon is separated from the rest of King Company. We're assigned to guard a battery of 105mm Howitzers. They are set up in a creek bottom a mile or so upstream from the Naktong River. Three of our four squads make a patrol each day into the hills. We are on 50 per cent alert at night. Staying awake is no problem. The big guns fire constantly.

Sergeant Finner warns us to be sure we go the full distance on our assigned patrols. He says this is the only way we can expect to keep from being surprised by North Koreans who could be hiding out in farm houses, or even on the hilltops. Each time we go out, Sergeant Krause, makes sure we go as far as we are supposed to.

Some of us don't like Sergeant Finner, but we are not dumb enough to disobey an order.

I'm in charge of a patrol. We are seven men. Our detail is to check a small valley about two miles from the battery perimeter.

I'm told it's a routine patrol to make sure there are no North Koreans holed up there.

I'm kind of excited, being in charge of a patrol.

We enter the valley on a footpath. There is no road.

I send one man to the top of the hills on each side of this very narrow valley. They are to move parallel to the rest of the patrol. Their job is to travel along the military crest; just out of sight of anyone who might have the top of the ridge under observation from the other side. The flankers are also detailed to crawl to the top of each hill and check for any enemy on the other side.

The valley is only about a mile long. We cover it

quickly. Two houses and a shed are checked. I insist that it be done as we've been taught; expose yourself only when you are covered. If you see some one, fire first.

We pick a few apples and head back to the battery perimeter.

It's so hot and humid we never dry out; especially overnight. During the dark hours, we strain to see and hear, but the guns take away any chance of hearing. Every night, firing begins somewhere on the perimeter, but we never find any bodies. The creek bottom is covered with fog every morning. The fog doesn't burn off until 0800 or later. We're real nervous by the time the fog lifts.

06September1950

We thought we were becoming veterans as we patrolled the hills around the battery perimeter. We saw and fired at North Korean patrols, but couldn't tell if we hit anyone. They always disappeared as we tried to close with them. The best part of the day was the end of a long patrol. We usually had to wade the creek to enter the perimeter of the artillery battery. The cool water soaked our hot, tired feet.

This afternoon we began our "walk in the sun" that led to the "real war."

We load the Third Platoon on trucks, meet the rest of the company at a crossroad, and as best I can tell, we head north and east. Rumors fly up and down the column, but no one really knows where we are going.

Only our officers know that King Company is about to make its first attack.

When the trucks stop, we form up in two columns, one on each side of the road. We advance along the edge of the road, trying to watch for mines; still heading north and east. With few words, and many hand signals to pass orders to the rear, we move up the road at five yard intervals.

About a half hour after leaving the trucks, we turn right, off the road, into a narrow valley, on a path that is only wide enough for one man. As we continue our five yard interval, the sight of our scouts on the hills on both sides of the valley shows that Captain Curfman knows what he's doing. The scouts move cautiously, just below the ridgeline, on the military crest, securing our flanks from surprise attack. We are still amateurs, but we're well

trained and we trust our CO.

Captain Curfman has been CO and father figure to most of us for more than 18 months. He's a "mustang." He was an enlisted man in the Pacific in World War II. During the fighting, he received a field commission.

He was our CO for the whole period we were at Camp Carson.

I worked for him as mail clerk for about 6 months, and as company clerk for a month, when our regular clerk was on leave. I know I was the lousiest company clerk he had ever seen, but he was patient, and never raised his voice to me, even when he told me to redo the daily morning report for the fourth or fifth time.

I was privileged to hear his reason for sending three King Company soldiers to be court martialed. The three soldiers had been caught stealing gas from cars in the company parking lot.

Captain Curfman had the men in his office. I was in the outer office. He was telling them why they were to be court martialed.

They had stolen from their fellow soldiers. The men who would have put their trust in them if they were in combat. He would have punished them with the severest company punishment allowed if they had been caught stealing from anyone else. He was, in effect, "throwing the book at them" because they had committed the most serious of crimes. They had stolen from their own comrades. He wouldn't stand for that.

He doesn't stand for any nonsense, but isn't afraid to stand up to a superior officer if he knows the position he is taking is right. That holds for a single GI in trouble

unfairly, or for the whole battalion.

He approaches every situation with the long and short consequences in mind.

I will follow him into hell, or go in first if he orders me.

Another half hour, and the 3rd Platoon is told to stop, and move off the trail. The 4th Platoon moves to the other side of the trail and to set up their 60mm mortars. The 1st and 2nd Platoons continue on the narrow track.

"3rd Platoon, listen up!" Sergeant Finner is standing a few feet up the hill. "We're going to climb this hill. When I give the order you move up to the crest and start firing at the hill on the other side. Keep your interval and don't stick your head over the top until I tell you."

For some reason the army relies on the GI -the lowly ground pounder- to win battles and wars, following the strange policy that the less each GI knows about the military situation, the better he'll fight -or so it seems to me.

What the 3rd Platoon isn't told, is that the 1st and 2nd Platoons are going farther up the valley until they can cross over the ridge out of sight of the enemy. The two assault platoons will then reverse their course, travel back down the next valley until they are positioned between the hill on which we are waiting, and the one held by the enemy. The assault platoons are lucky that the stream bed is lined with heavy brush, giving them pretty good cover.

We reach the ridgeline just as the company mortars begin to fire.

"Now! Everybody up on the ridge! Fire slow! Fire

steady!" Finner yells over the hollow sound of the mortar shells hitting the bottom of their tubes.

The deadly blast of those same exploding shells landing on the hill across the valley, makes us duck. It's the first time I've heard the sounds of a mortar shell from the "thunk" as it hits the bottom of the tube, to the "whisper" as it passes overhead, ending in a blast as it explodes on the hill where the North Koreans are dug in.

It's hard to find individual targets through the smoke and even more difficult to hit them as my hands shake with fear and excitement. As the assault platoons charge up the hill, trying to run and fire at the same time, our mortars stop. Individual enemy soldiers stand in their holes and fire their rifles or throw grenades down the hill at our guys. We have targets. A whistle blast, blown by a North Korean officer or noncom, starts their withdrawal from the hill. We fire rapidly as the smoke from the mortars and grenades clear, and the enemy begins to retreat. As they leave their holes to flee westward, we kill more of them.

"Cease fire! Hold your fire!" Lieutenant Brown yells. Lieutenant Brown is our new Platoon Leader. He came to us while we were with the artillery battery.

His command is repeated along the line until everyone in the 3rd Platoon has stopped firing. The men of the 1st and 2nd Platoons keep firing even after they charge over the crest of the hill. Some men stop to check foxholes and bodies lying around. Several of our men are down. GIs are waving at medics to get them to come help their buddies. We can hear the shouts of our men and the crack of individual rifles fired at the retreating North Koreans.

They are running across an open field, heading for the safety of a large mountain, six or seven hundred yards away.

Ike gives me a wave. He hasn't been ordered to fire his Bazooka. I used several clips in my BAR. That's the first time I have fired my weapon at anyone. I hand the empty clips to Brown. He lays on his back, staring at the sky, blowing air out of his lungs, trying to relax. Geraghty is on his stomach staring at the captured hill.

Within minutes we are ordered down the hill, across the dry streambed and up the captured hill to join the rest of the company.

Closeup, the aftermath of the attack is sickening. Dead Koreans lay as they fell. Some have parts of their bodies missing. All are covered with blood and gore. Several GIs are being helped by medics. A couple of our men are seriously wounded, their faces gray with pain and loss of blood.

One man is held down by two GIs. He is thrashing his arms and screaming for them to kill him. An exploding grenade has blown away most of his legs and his genitals. I don't know him by name. He transferred from another unit only days before we left Camp Carson. He was married five days before we shipped out. I look at him as I pass by, thinking, I will never forget this sight. I'm sickened by what I'm seeing, fearful, and grateful that it isn't me. He dies on the way to the aid station.

The 3rd Platoon is placed on the forward slope, facing the field and the mountain where the North Koreans have fled.

Platoon Sergeant Finner walks up and down the

perimeter, above the foxholes we inherited from the original owners. "Two men to a hole. Make sure you have it the way you want it before dark. They'll be back to try to take this hill tonight."

"Do you really think so Sarge? " Bergstrom asks.

"Count on it! Get everything together in your hole. No one leaves his hole after dark!"

Sergeant Krause, has done a good job choosing the BAR position. It's almost ideal. The slope in front is very steep. Our field of fire is unlimited to the front, right-front, and left-front. The only problem is that the slope in front of our position becomes almost level a few yards below our hole; forming a bowl, filled with bushes.

Krause tells Brown and me to hurry with putting our gear out of the way so we can double check our fields of fire before dark. There are foxholes just a couple of yards to the right and left or our position, making good flank protection. Brown is already making the one-man hole larger.

Sergeant Finner squats behind our foxhole and stares at the mountain. "Hofsiss, set up your weapon and put some rounds on that hill. I can see people moving around up there."

"That must be six-seven hundred yards, Sarge. Am I supposed to hit anything?" I shake my head as I realize I'm whining.

Finner's style is exactly the opposite of Sergeant Quimby's. Sure wish he hadn't transferred, but at least he's out of this mess. Finner's style consists of; he speaks, you do, no questions, no discussion.

"Get on with it! That's what that weapon is for.

You got an adjustable sight, use it. I want harassing fire on that hill."

My hands shake as I set the BAR on its bipod and put an extra clip beside it. I'm nervous and about half sick. Even though I wasn't in the actual assault on the hill, and our platoon suffered no casualties, the sight of the dead and torn bodies, and the wounded men, makes me realize that we are only now getting into combat. Besides, my naive sense of fairness makes me question if I should be shooting at people who aren't shooting at me. I adjust the sights for six hundred yards, see movement, and fire.

Finner is standing behind me; binoculars pressed to his eyes. "Way low. Raise it a couple of clicks.'

I nod. 'We got any tracers? I could see how I'm shootin', if I had tracers."

"No! Keep shootin'. Let 'em know we're here." Finner turns and walks away.

He's getting to me again.

I hear another BAR firing.

All right, I decide. If I gotta do it, let's see if I can hit somethin'. I wipe my glasses with the one handkerchief I keep clean for that purpose.

I adjust the sight three clicks up, suck in air, release part of it, and squeeze the trigger.

"He couldn't see where that first round landed! I'll have to see someone fall!" I growl to Brown.

I fire every time I see movement. I can't tell for sure if I hit anyone but several targets fall or jump when I fire. The light begins to fade.

I end the harassing fire on my own.

"No point in wastin' ammo if they're comin' to get

us tonight." I'm not as sure of myself as I try to sound.

I was frightened when we left Carson, and nothing has happened since then to make me feel any better.

As darkness falls, I strain to set in my mind every tree and bush; where the paths are, and how the enemy is likely to approach.

It isn't that I, or any of the others have become instant, hardened veterans after one twenty minute fire-fight. I haven't even been in danger yet. Though we're frightened, there are memories of the training that's been drilled into us for eighteen months. We "played games" like this many nights in the hills and even in the snow covered mountains above Leadville, Colorado. We laughed and were laughed at when we were "killed", or "captured." Victory on those occasions brought us commendation, or at least a "well done." If we do it right tonight, our reward will simply be,... tomorrow.

Conversations dwindle to whispers between hole partners. If you have to smoke, you do it under your poncho. Our eyes alternately water and dry out as we strain to see without light. Every few minutes someone hisses for quiet.

It's dark now. I'm afraid.

I've been afraid of the dark for as long as I can remember. When I was home alone at night, and Mama was at work, I'd hear footsteps of people going up and down the stairs outside our cold water flat. I'd curl up in a ball and wet my bed rather than get up and walk through that dark flat. I would stay out on the streets late at night, just hanging around stores or taverns where there were lights and people; any place except that dark, frightening

bedroom. I've never told anyone. I thought I had gotten over it.

The four summers I spent on the dairy farm had helped me to go out into the dark. I would hear the cows and horses making the same noises they made in the daylight. Part of my chores was to go out to the barn before I went to bed to be sure everything was all right.

The best part of the day on the farm was sitting on the porch in the dark, tired, but feeling good about the day's work, listening to the night creatures' sounds, and the farmer and his wife, talking quietly in their bedroom.

Getting up before daylight wasn't bad either after I knew what was making the sounds.

During training, when we were on bivouac, night was the best time. We would lie under the stars and whisper for hours. Just like the farmer and his wife did before they went to sleep.

Now I'm scared again.

Sound? No sound? An animal? The wind? Nerves become taut; relax, and tighten again. Shallow breathing seems to make less noise, but it soon becomes difficult, and occasionally each of us has to take a deep shuddering breath.

I stare until my eyes hurt. If I stare at one spot too long I begin to think I see movement. I look away, then back. Most of the time I still can't tell if someone is out there.

"What time is it?" I hiss.

"2300."

"You're kiddin'!"

"Shh! Shut up down there!" Sergeant Finner's hole

is to our left-rear and inside the outer ring of holes.

"I hope we got enough ammo! How many clips we got?" I try to whisper so only Brown can hear me.

"Ten clips. I refilled the ones we used this afternoon. I've got ten clips for my M1." Brown cups his hand near my ear.

"Let's put our grenades between us." I can't keep from talking.

Time drags. It is so dark that we can't see any features of the hill or anything outside our hole.

The word has been passed to quit smoking. Even smoke can direct the enemy to our positions.

Suddenly, they're here! I think I hear the harsh, grunting sounds of Korean just before someone fires. In seconds everyone is firing. M1s, BARs, machine guns, grenades, and finally, the company mortars fire from the reverse slope. The only light is the strobe-like muzzle flashes or light from the explosions of grenades and mortar shells. In spite of the constant blasts of sound, I think I hear shouting directly below us.

"Throw a grenade!" I yell in Brown's ear, pointing out and down from our hole.

Instead of whispering, now I have to shout at the top of my voice.

He pulls the pin on a fragmentation grenade and flips it up and out. The explosion and screams seem to come at the same time.

"Good throw!" I yell again.

We fire mostly at sounds. A North Korean officer or noncom shouts and several American guns blast away in the direction of his voice. Firing brings return fire.

A whistle sounds somewhere out in the field and the invisible enemy, still shouting and screaming, moves away. A magnesium flare -the first fired in this firefight- exposes a scene of running, stumbling men in its blue-white light. Finally, mortar shells escort the enemy across the field.

My legs are shaking! I don't know when it started, but I am losing control. I reach down and grip my knees, hard. As I press, the trembling eases. I relax a little against the back of our hole.

"Stay in your hole! Nobody gets out of his hole! They'll by back!" Sergeant Krause puts himself in danger by yelling, but he can tell that we're relaxing; getting careless as we begin talking like frightened magpies.

They do come again; shouting, firing, throwing grenades. We return fire; sometimes firing a full clip at a sound. It seems to Brown and me that the whole effort of the enemy is to knock us out. They're below our hole, firing, yelling, throwing grenades. We run out of grenades and have to expose ourselves to fire into the bowl-like depression below us. Enemy mortar shells begin falling inside the perimeter. Our own mortars walk shells up the hill toward our positions in an effort to break up the attack. Shrapnel buzzes through the air from the front and behind.

We fire and yell curses, as if the filthy epithets will kill where our bullets can't. They're so close, their silhouettes creep up the sky as they climb toward our holes. We can actually smell the garlic they eat!

The enemy penetrates our perimeter on the rear slope, putting us in danger of being overrun. We don't

dare fire behind us. We have to trust our men inside the perimeter to protect themselves, and our backs. A few bayonets are bloodied as several of the enemy try to take the company CP. The fight continues into the early morning.

Before dawn, they retreat again. The screams of the wounded and dying take the place of gunfire and exploding shells. It seems an eternity before there's enough light to see. A blanket of fog forms as dawn breaks, adding to the horror of the scene. GIs leave their holes in spite of the danger. Buddies need help and there aren't enough medics. They look at the wounds, retch and vomit at the sight, then they do what they can for their comrades.

07September1951

The sun burns off the fog. The enemy is gone, except for those who died, or are still dying on the hill, and in the field. The rest of us leave our holes, coughing, stretching, groaning, as adrenalin-stiffened muscles move grudgingly.

The air begins to heat, creating a smell, many smells. The odor of gunpowder and cordite is sharp in the nostrils. We have sweated in spite of the cool night air. Our fear adds its distinct odor. Most of us have urinated in our clothes and some have lost control of their bowels. Blood is adding to the mixture of odors as it soaks into the ground. From the bodies of our enemies, are added the pungent, peculiar odors of unwashed body and garlic; the national body odor of Korea, North and South.

Brown and I stretch out on the ground above our hole. We're exhausted. Shudders rattle our limbs as we try to relax.

"God, I hope that's the last time we do that! I-I don't think I could..." Brown groans. His mind seems unwilling to form the rest of the thought.

I close my eyes. I feel sick.

"I don't know what I expected, but not this." I croak from a throat dried by fear and excitement.

I slip back into our hole. "I need a drink. You want your canteen?"

A few minutes later we are moving like old men, checking on our comrades in the holes around us. We have lost a few more wounded. How long can the company last at this rate? I don't know the exact numbers, but I can count. We won't last long if we lose 10 or 15 men

every night. The wounded are just as lost to us as the dead.

God, listen to me! These guys are my friends! Some I've known for two years! There were a few less than 200 in King Company when we got here. At this rate, the company will be whittled down pretty fast.

Brown and I luck out. We're left on the hill to keep watch while most of the men are sent off the hill to search the enemy dead. Something will have to be done with them soon.

I'm not sure what day of the month it is. I think it's about the 7th of September. I do know it's hot.

08September1950

I don't know how we're going to live through many days like yesterday and this morning.

We eat C-rations for breakfast. Everyone wants to sleep, but we first have to get ready for a counterattack. Two men in each squad are ticked off to stand guard. Everyone else cleans and reloads weapons.

Brown and I fill BAR clips until we use up our loose ammo. We put our clean, oiled weapons on a poncho to protect them from dirt.

We peel off our dirty clothes to allow a little air and sun to reach our skin. Washing consists of pouring a cupful of water into a helmet and wetting the corner of a towel to scrub face and hands. It doesn't get rid of much dirt, but it is a great morale booster.

"You're legs look awful!" Brown shakes his head at the sight of my legs. They are covered from knee to foot with bloody, pus-filled ulcers. "They're gettin' worse!"

"I know. Medics call it the crud, Korean Crud." I peel a stained sock from my foot. "They gave me a penicillin shot the other day, but I can't tell it did any good. Two weeks in this country and its eatin' me from the feet up. It's from too much sweat, havin' my feet wet too long, and not changin' socks often enough. That's what they tell me. You know how I sweat. I don't think I'll ever be dry!"

"They ought to send you to the rear until you get rid of 'em."

" No one leaves the line unless they have battle wounds." I say, as I scrub the sores with my filthy socks. "Besides, I don't think there's much rear left."

"How come I ain't got 'em?"

"Just lucky I guess. " I allow myself a thin smile. I pull on a pair of equally stained, but dry socks. We sit on the edge of our hole, dozing, talking, smoking, waiting.

What a crazy life. Last night we were fighting for our lives and today we watch the war as if we're in an outdoor theater. Something is happening on just about every hill and mountain around us. Artillery and heavy mortars are blasting the mountain across the open field from us. Planes are constantly diving on mountains south, west, and north of our hill. The hill to our east; the one we fired from yesterday, is empty. We can't see the Naktong River, but planes are diving behind the mountains to the west. We figure they're bombing the enemy on or near the river. The sounds of war at a distance come to us seconds after the event. Distance dulls the explosions and the whine of the diving planes.

We aren't resting very easy as we watch the action around us. 105mm rounds keep us on edge as they crash into the mountain where the North Koreans who counter-attacked us, are holed up. It's impossible to identify what flies into the air with each explosion. The larger the bomb or shell, the greater the cloud of smoke and dust. The napalm tanks that tumble from the the P51 Mustangs are the most awesome, and frightening. They ignite as the tank of jellied gasoline hits the earth. An inferno belches ahead of the gas tank that has been made into a bomb, burning and melting everything and everyone in its path for 50 yards or more.

God, I hope they don't make a mistake and drop one of those on us!

We take turns dozing in short naps.

"One man from each hole can go to the other side of the hill for chow!" Sergeant Krause yells.

Hot chow has been cooked by the company mess crew and hauled by truck, and on foot, on the backs of South Korean laborers, to the rear side of the hill.

"I'll go first and be back quick as I can." I tell Brown.

Every man is to be armed at all times, so I strap on my .45 caliber pistol. I did poorly with it on the range, but it's easier than carrying my BAR or Brown's M1.

Brown slides into the hole. "OK. I'll clean the hole out some.

"How about making the grenade sump deeper. We may get one inside next time."

I walk to the left around the hill, just below the military crest so I won't be silhouetted against the sky.

I am almost at the end of the front half of the hill, the half that is exposed to the enemy. Ike is sitting on the edge of his hole. As I glance at the ground to make sure of my footing, I see a puff of dirt kick up about six inches in front of my boot. I take another step, and see another puff of dirt. Then there is a sound! It's the flat crack of a rifle, fired from almost a half mile away. Someone is shooting at me! I sprint behind the hill as the sound of the second shot reaches me. As I pass Ike, he looks at me in surprise.

"Down!" I yell "Sniper!"

As soon as I get to the back side of the hill, I dive to the ground and slide to a sitting position. Someone begins firing from the forward slope.

I lean back and take a deep breath.

Why me! Men have been walking over this hill all day. Not one shot has been fired. Do they know who I am? Are they trying to get me because I fired at them yesterday? Do they know that I'm the BAR man? Whatever the reason, a North Korean sniper is trying to kill me, even as I tried to kill them!

Stranger still, no more shots are fired from the enemy's hill. Of course, there are no more targets. Everyone on the forward slope of our hill has gone to ground.

I go through the mess line, but my appetite isn't what it was. I eat quickly, gather up some ammo, and head for my hole.

When I get back to the forward slope, I run for our hole as fast as I can. Brown is in the hole with my BAR, looking at the enemy mountain.

"Did you see that?" I gasp.

"Yeah! I could hear you! I fired a couple of rounds just to try to make them duck. I thought you might've been hit!"

When my breathing is back to normal I speak again. "I got a couple of bandoleers and some grenades. If you can, get more grenades. I'm gonna carry as many as I can from now on. I like 'em!"

Brown races around the hill for his chow. He returns with more grenades. We're settling into our hole, as Sergeant Finner passes the word for everyone to get in a hole and stay there. We are to be on one hundred percent alert.

We put everything between us so we'll know where it is after dark. We put the hand grenades on the edge of

the hole and make sure all the BAR clips are filled. We check to be sure all the covers of our belt pouches are open. The clips won't fall out as long as we stay upright, and it's so much easier to pull them out.

My stomach is in a knot all the time. My hands shake, and I want to smoke every chance I get. This awful feeling, that a bullet is going to blow my brains out any second, or worse, a shell will blow me into pieces, never leaves me. I thought I might be just borrowing trouble, until this afternoon.

Oh, how I wish I were home with Laura! I squeeze my eyes shut trying to remember what she looks like; every detail about her. I don't want to take her picture out of it's cellophane wrapper. It's almost an insult to expose her to this horrible place.

She said in her latest letter that she is probably pregnant. What a wonderful and terrible thing for us. I'll just have to be as careful as I can.

Several hours after dark the North Koreans come again. We think we hear people moving in the field; then in the bushes below. We're sure it isn't our imagination when we hear the gutteral sounds of Korean; probably coming from noncoms ordering their men up the hill. As the night before, a group gathers below our position. Someone fires and the fight is on. We fire and they fire. We throw grenades and they throw grenades.

Men yell in anger, pain, and fear!

Our company mortars begin firing from the rear slope. We can see the enemy only in the flash of exploding shells and grenades.

There seems to be more of them than last night,

and they seem to be pressing harder. The piercing whistle blasts and angry shouts in Korean seem to be orders urging the enemy soldiers up the hill.

Over the noise, someone yells for me to fire in front of their position. They can't fire fast enough.

I move from one end of our hole to the other, firing at sounds.

Every few minutes, Brown throws a grenade into the pocket of brush below our foxhole. It's quiet for a short period, then another group gathers below our hole. I think they're trying to find a way to get to us.

We yell for flares, but none come.

I move to the right side of the hole, firing to my right, across the front of Geraghty's hole. I'm right handed, so I put my weight against the front wall, leaning out of the hole more than usual.

A figure suddenly fills the sky in front of me! He's only a few feet from my face when he sees me. He swings the barrel of his rifle toward me. He's too close for me to raise my BAR without stepping back. All of my weight is against the front wall, and my feet are out of position. I let go of the BAR trigger and reach for the pistol on my hip. I shove it in his direction and fire! The dark form flies backward down the hill, slinging his rifle away as he disappears in the blackness. My hand shakes so hard I have to use both hands to put the .45 back in its holster.

We curse and yell and fire!

Again the whistles blow, and the North Koreans retreat. As they flee across the field, dragging some of their dead and wounded, flares blossom in the sky as if to help them find their way in the darkness.

We pray daylight will come before the enemy tries again. The rule to stay in our holes is modified. Medics are quietly announced from hole to hole to treat the wounded. It's dangerous, but that's what these brave men do.

Some of the wounded are easy to find as they scream for help or groan in pain. There are groans and screams coming from the field, too.

The gray light of dawn allows the exhausted men of King Company to see that only the dead and dying are on the hill and scattered on the field below us. I pull myself out of the hole and scoot along in a tight squat to make as small a target as possible to any sniper or straggler. I have to see the man I shot with the .45.

I've been told that the power of a .45 bullet will throw a charging man backward even if he is struck in the arm. The dead North Korean lays several yards below Geraghty's hole. His head is downhill, arms and legs splayed. There is a black and brown stain in the middle of his sand colored jacket. His mouth is open in a silent shout, or plea, or curse. I turn him over. The hole in his back is almost as big as my fist. I stare at the hole and the blood oozing up his back.

"Good shot." Geraghty smiles a small smile as he crawls from his hole.

"Couldn't miss." I turn to my friend.

I could as well say, I didn't dare miss. What is meant to be a smile, twists into a grotesque look of misery, as I see up close, what I've done.

The air is warm and thick with moisture. Everything is wet. The dawn pushes the night away. All

colors are muted by the grey of the fog.

Men begin to change places in foxholes, to visit, to find out what has happened to buddies; who has been hit. Stories range from horrible to weird.

One man has been shot at point-blank range by someone in the headquarters section. The wounded trooper had left his hole during the firefight, and, probably in panic, ran toward the crest of the hill.

A story races through the company, about a GI who supposedly jumped from his hole when a grenade landed in it. He then had to jump into a third hole to avoid another grenade. The story ended with the man returning to the first hole to keep from being blown up by another grenade. I never found out who it was supposed to be.

Many of the tactics we learned in training are useless, but it's obvious if we haven't learned discipline; we had better learn it soon. None of the training, none of the classes taught anything about the fear; that we should expect to lose control of our bladder and bowels; that we would shake all over, uncontrollably, before, during, and after a firefight. We weren't told that fear was to be our constant companion, a part of each of us, every minute of the day and night. We weren't told that adrenaline would keep us going during the fight, but leave us aching all over, almost too stiff to move, when it stops flowing. No one ever told us that we aren't going to have time to grieve for dead comrades, or for ourselves.

I realize there is no time or place when I'll be safe. I'm going to have to watch my step, look in all directions at once, and never drop my guard. Can I watch where I put my feet, while watching every bush, rock, and paddy for

the enemy? Can I be ready for every shell before it hits? Will all of that be enough?

Will I ever get back to Laura? I'm going to have to keep her in a special corner of my memory. I can't let thoughts of her distract me. I will have to pick the moments carefully, so that the one misstep that might kill me doesn't happen because I'm dreaming of her. Now all I have to do is figure out how to do all that!

10September1950

Day before yesterday we moved two hills to the north and east.

Our new hill is fresh. There is no enemy to fight, but also no holes to remodel and save us a lot of sweat. North Koreans aren't very good at digging foxholes. They don't dig deep and are terrible housekeepers, but any start on a hole is a big plus as long as there are no bodies in it, or it hasn't been used as a latrine.

It rained all afternoon while we were moving. We climbed up a draw on the new hill. It was slick and sticky at the same time. We couldn't keep our footing and the mud was clinging to our boots in big clods. I don't know why the enemy didn't shoot at us. We had pretty good cover, but their hill is only a couple hundred yards away, across a steepsided, narrow valley. They must have been able to see or hear us.

As soon as the platoon is assigned its sector of the perimeter, Sergeant Krause tells Brown and me where to set up our BAR. We're located on the right end of the forward slope. The guys on the exposed part of the hill say that the enemy's hill, Hill 174, is swarming with North Koreans.

Brown and I have become good foxhole engineers. We make it long enough for one of us to lie flat, plus enough extra room so one of us can stand guard. We dig a grenade sump. That's a trench dug at right angles to the floor of the hole. If a grenade lands in the hole it will roll on the slanted floor, into the sump. You do have to raise your feet or you might lose them. We haven't had to test it yet. We try to keep improving our hole every day.

Our hole is screened from Hill 174 by a high point on our hill. A thicket of trees and bushes reaches from the valley floor to that high point. There are several rifle positions on the wooded point. The hill is very steep there, and the brush under the trees is probably too thick for a man to penetrate.

The enemy ignores us. We dig our holes, clean our weapons, clean ourselves a little bit, and get wet in another afternoon shower.

It's so hot there is no cooling from the rain; just clinging clothes and wetness. Everything is wet after two days of rain. Our boots are beginning to mold inside. It's hard to save anything; especially cigarettes, matches, paper. I'm losing Laura's letters almost as fast as I get them. They turn to mush in a few days.

I walk to Malool's hole. We sit together writing letters. He's writing to his mother about the fine time he is having in Japan.

I can't tell Laura what is really happening, either; the fighting and the killing; the ulcers on my legs that are getting worse; the dirt and filth that is everywhere; especially on our clothes and bodies. Instead, I write about how hot it is; how fog forms every morning making the world eerie, and unreal. Most of my letters tell her over and over; in as many ways as possible; that I love her and miss her and want to be with her.

She has already complained that my letters aren't as good as those I wrote before we were married. I know it's true. I used to write about everything I did. Now I try to write about some things that are happening, but purposely leave out the horror of this place and how we have

to live. How can I make her share this hell on earth?

Malool and I sit and smoke, griping about everything. Things don't look too good. Beside having Finner as platoon sergeant, we have a new platoon leader, Second Lieutenant Brown. He transferred into the company a few days after we got here. He's a graduate of West Point, Class of 49 I think. He was with a unit on the line in July. They were nearly wiped out so Lieutenant Brown was transferred to King Company as 3rd Platoon's Leader. We don't know what to expect from him.

Artillery shells begin crashing into the enemy positions on Hill 174. There is no schedule or rhythmn to the firing. A shell lands at one end of the ridge, at the other end, in the middle, one end, then the other. After several rounds, the entire battery fires for effect, and shells blast the whole ridge. Occasionally, a short round lands in the valley. We duck and jump as the shells whoosh over our heads. All the noise and destruction is being orchestrated by an officer in a foxhole on the forward slope of our hill. He's the artillery FO (forward observer).

A short metallic scream from directly overhead announces the arrival of the first enemy mortar shell to drop on our hill. I guess the North Koreans realize the artillery fire is being directed from our hill and are going to stop it with counter fire. We all dive for cover as the shell lands harmlessly at the crest of the hill. The tempo of metallic screams and explosions increases as the enemy mortarmen fire for effect.

A shell can be dropped into a mortar tube about as fast as the gunner can move, and these guys are working

their tubes. They must be determined to kill that FO, or pay back for the pasting they are taking. They saturate our hill.

Brown and I dive into our hole and squat there. Every shell that lands nearby makes us flinch as we try to grind our bodies into the earth. Dirt and shrapnel strike one side of the hole, then the other. Pieces of hot steel bounce off the side of the hole, dropping on our fatigues, and the back of our hands, scorching our clothes and skin. A close hit makes a buzzing sound like a swarm of angry bees, as shrapnel flys over our heads. At the explosion of every shell I know -even as I try to squeeze myself into nothing- that I'm going to be hit. I alternate between praying, "get it over quick with a direct hit" and "please, let it be a million dollar wound and get me out of here," even as I will the next shell to land somewhere else.

As I try to control my bladder and my bowels, I have to control my panic, too. The urge to get away from the screaming crack of death that accompanies each exploding shell, followed by buzzing knives of shrapnel, is almost uncontrollable. Time is our worst enemy. As the barrage continues, it becomes harder not to jump out of the hole and run. The pressure gets unbearable. Logic and panic say, run.! Get away from here and hide somewhere by yourself, where the shells can't find you. We shout! We curse! We whimper!

Brown and I never grab and hold onto each other, but we are holding each other as surely as if we had. Our helmets are solidly clamped together as we shout to each other and curse everyone and everything. There is no false bravery between us. We don't mind sharing our fear.

In some ways I'm closer to Brown than anyone. We are closer than blood brothers.

How many shells and grenades can land near us without ever landing in our hole?

When the shelling finally ends, we sit up. The first thing we do is get ready to smoke. Once again the adrenaline and fear leave us weak. My hands shake as I light my pipe. Names are shouted from one hole to another, as we check on each other. Shells continue to fall often enough to harass us, and keep us in our holes. Every few minutes, one of us raises up to check the area for a possible attack.

Night moves in quickly, then drags. A shell lands on our hill. A shell lands on the enemy. We wait. It is so dark I can't see anything. We begin to hear strange squawking sounds from the creek bed between our hill and the North Koreans. We soon realize the creek bed and the trees are full of wildlife. All night long we hear the voices of herons and owls. When they call from a tree near our hole, I jump as the hair rises on the back of my neck.

A pattern is in the making. Very few nights have passed with no firing. It's brought on by not being able to see, by moonlight, by flares, by natural sounds of animals, by wind and trees, by fatigue, and nerves on edge from fear, frustration, and lack of sleep. Fire discipline is important, and breaking it could give our positions away, but there is also a point at which you can't wait to shake hands with the enemy as he kills you at point blank range.

14September1950

Daylight comes slowly. I thought it was going to be an ordinary day. Even though I've been shot at, shelled, and I've killed a man up close, I thought I was still a young man with a future. Today I became an old man. Today, I began to die. Nothing will ever be worse than today!

Fog blots out the world, except for the crest of our hill. If the enemy attacks, they can rush out of the fog just a few yards from our perimeter. They don't, and the heat of the sun burns off the fog.

Within minutes after the fog is gone, shells begin exploding on Hill 174. This is not harrassing fire. This is saturation. 8 inch ("Long Tom"), shells fly over our heads and crash into the hill across the narrow valley. The continuous whisper of the big shells boring through the air as they spin in flight, is followed a few seconds later by explosions on Hill 174. I wear a continual coat of goose bumps, and feel like a turtle, drawing my head into my helmet, and the rest of my body into our hole. Whenever a shell flies lower than the others, the whisper becomes a wind of death just a few feet above our heads. Something big is going to happen.

Sergeant Finner walks up to Sergeant Krause's hole. Three Koreans in fatigues squat behind him as soon as he stops. They aren't much taller than their M1s.

I drift over to hear what is going on.

"These are your men. Use 'em just like the GIs." Finner is telling Krause.

The three Koreans look like they wish they were somewhere else, anywhere else. One is an old man. At

least he looks like an old man to us. The other two look like kids. Through one of the Koreans in another squad, who speaks a little English, we learn they are nineteen and twenty-one. They look to be about fifteen. They, and the old man were conscripted off the streets of Taegu. They are five-day veterans of the South Korean Army! None of the Koreans assigned to our squad speaks a word of English and none of us speaks Korean or Japanese. They can't field strip a rifle, and don't know the use of most of the other equipment they've been issued. These men are KATUSAs (Korean Augmentation to the United States Army).

Krause points to me and then to the oldest Korean. "This is your ammo bearer."

I was glad that Sergeant Finner had walked away.

"Come on Sarge! I don't need anyone else to look after. I'm afraid I won't be able to take care of myself. Brown and I are a good team. Let us stay together."

"Oh, you'll stay together. This man is being added to your team."

There is nothing else I can say.

I think Krause knew those Koreans were on the way, and that Finner had told him to assign one of them to me.

Brown and I ignore our new team member until we want him to do something. Then we struggle with making signs and repeating a few words over and over until he understands, or we do it ourselves. Most of the time he squats, silent, until he is told to do something. His name is Kim. It seems that most Koreans are named Kim. Brown and I call him "Old Man." His first assignment is to dig our

hole bigger so he will fit. I'm not looking forward to sleeping with him. The Koreans eat garlic like candy. We can actually smell them from a distance.

About noon, Sorensen delivers a message for Brown and me to get up to the platoon CP. "Take all your ammo, your entrenching tool (shovels), and your canteen. That's all."

I can't ask any questions because he is already trotting off. I wave my arms at the Old Man telling him several times to, "Lookee! Lookee!"

Lieutenant Brown is sitting near his hole at the platoon CP. Eight other men are standing close by. Malool is one of them. We exchange nods and squat together, waiting.

"Love Company is going to take that hill." Lieutenant Brown points toward Hill 174. "You're going to provide supporting fire from that hill."

He points to another hill; actually a knob on top of a hill, several hundred yards to the north of our position. The two hills are connected by a saddle.

Lieutenant Brown instructs us. "One machine gun team, one BAR team. The rest of you will be flank protection. Sergeant Larson is in charge. Move out right away. Dig in the best you can. The fire mission begins at 1400." We move quickly and easily into position on the forward slope of the knob. Artillery shells continue pounding Hill 174. We dig our holes about waist deep and are ready by 1400.

We get a glimpse of Love Company in the valley. They're forming skirmish lines in the creek bed; screened from the North Koreans by trees and bushes. The shelling of Hill 174 ends abruptly.

On Sergeant Larson's command, the machine gun and my BAR begin a tattoo of short bursts. We can't see any enemy troops so we fire at the places where they've been digging near the crest of the hill. We lose sight of Love Company as they move through the trees and start to climb. Machine guns and BARs on King Company's hill join in. Mortar rounds begin falling on the enemy. Smoke makes it hard to find targets.

We have been firing for a few minutes when, suddenly, a mortar shell lands just below our position. Within a few seconds another lands above us, near the top of the knob. Two shells and the North Korean mortarmen have our range! The next round will almost certainly land somewhere in between. We're bracketed! It takes a good mortar squad to find the range that quickly. Shells are landing faster than I can count. The noise blasts our ears and our nerves. The angry buzz of shrapnel is everywhere.

There's no way we can give support to Love Company now. We can't even raise our heads to look. Somehow the North Korean mortarmen have zeroed in on our five foxholes with pinpoint accuracy. I'll bet enemy mortarmen registered this knob as a possible target. Every shell is falling within a few feet of our shallow holes. We can only crouch down and wait to die.

Sergeant Larson is in a hole at the center of our position. "Get out! Behind the hill!" He screams over the roar of exploding shells.

The men in the hole on my left scramble out and race behind the hill. Brown and I are next. We jump up, and run full out behind the knob, and fall to the ground,

sucking great gulps of air. Malool and Sergeant Larson should be next. The last four men run to us. One is slightly wounded. Sergeant Krause, my squad leader, is the ranking NCO until Sergeant Larson can get away from the mortar barrage. I guess they waited to be last.

"Go! Back to the company! Move!" Krause waves his arm to include everybody.

I turn in the direction where I expect Malool and Sergeant Larson to come from. Maybe they're waiting for a lull in the shelling. Krause gives me a push and I trot toward our hill and the platoon CP. I drop to the ground again, and unhook my ammunition belt. I'm exhausted; still trying to catch my breath. I watch for Malool. The shelling stops. Malool and Larson should be in sight.

Sergeant Krause squats in front of me. He knows that Malool and I are friends. "Malool and Larson won't be comin'. They're dead!"

"That's silly!" I squeal. "I saw him when I jumped from my hole. They should have started right behind Brown and me."

I try to stand. Krause puts his hand on my chest to hold me back.

Krause's hand is shaking and his voice quivers as he leans against my chest. "A shell must have landed right in front of 'em as they stood up. There's nothin' left."

My brain seems to explode! I jump to my feet. I have to get to him! We can't leave him out there. Sorenson and Geraghty grab me. Their arms tighten in a hard embrace as I struggle. Both of them shout something in my ears, but I don't hear what it is. I roar my anger and grief from deep in my soul, as I slip toward the edge of

madness. They hold me until I quit struggling.

Malool, my friend!

I don't know when the firing on Hill 174 stops.

I sit on the ground surrounded by Geraghty, Brown, and Old Man. I don't know what I feel, other than my chest hurts and my throat is dry.

Just before dark, a detail is sent to get Malool and Sergeant Larson. I get up to help. Geraghty and Brown hold me again.

Malool is gone! He was a hardnosed 18 year old, molded by the streets of Bedford-Stuyvesant. He wanted everyone to believe he was tough. He was somber and pessimistic most of the time, but he had bloomed like a rose this spring, when he fell in love with a girl from Pueblo, named Wanda. Laura and I had double dated with them. We had even introduced that city boy to horseback riding.

It's getting dark. It's raining. Arty is shelling the gooks on Hill 174.

Damn you Malool! What am I going to tell your mother?

15September1950

Love Company's attack failed. They had heavy casualties.

I don't remember much about last night, except that Malool is dead. I think I was in some kind of shock.

I feel different. I feel as if I'll never laugh again, or maybe I feel as if there will never be anything to laugh about.

Malool had some things about him that made him seem sad, but there were also times when he was a joy to be around. He had a dry wit, kind of like Geraghty.

Malool, Ike, Geraghty and I have been in the same platoon since we joined the Army.

I think he felt about his girl in Pueblo, the way I feel about my Laura. And Oh, how he loved his mother! Now he's gone!

Sergeant Finner reminds us to clean our weapons and to get more ammo and grenades at the CP.

This afternoon, King Company will get its turn at trying to take Hill 174.

We move quickly down the gullies on the flanks of our hill. The artillery is making the North Koreans stay in their holes. We form our skirmish line in the same creek bed that sheltered Love Company before their attack on Hill 174.

That hill may destroy the whole 3rd Battalion.

My squad is the company's right flank. We have to trot a long way up the stream bed before we turn and face the hill, as a line of skirmishers. Lieutenant Brown starts out on my left front, a little ahead of the line.

We move through the trees and look up. The hill

is so steep we are going to have to crawl part of the way. It's a couple of hundred yards to the top.

The artillery stops. Battalion and company mortars take over, trying to make the enemy stay in their holes until we can scramble and crawl through the mud to the top. We can't move very fast on this slick mud. Every time I slip and fall, my helmet slides forward on my head. I have to keep pushing my glasses up on my nose. If I lose them I'm as good as dead.

There is no sign of life at the top of the hill. There's still hope. Maybe the enemy has been hurt enough in the bombardments and the fighting for this hill that they have just given up. Maybe the artillery and mortars have killed most of them.

Then the first enemy mortar shell lands about half way down the hill and I know it's going to be a fight. Shells fall faster. The explosions shake the ground, and shrapnel buzzes around us. Some bigger pieces zip by. They ping on rocks and helmets, and splat in mud and flesh. A piece ricochets off my helmet and rings like a high pitched bell in my ears.

Our skirmish line disappears. I lose Brown and Old Man. We soon become small clusters of men trying to stay alive by staying close to someone else who is still alive. Every time we rush forward to a tree or rock we leave men behind. Some are dead and some are wounded. A few just quit and decide to stay where they are. The South Koreans fall behind, confused and totally out of it. We keep slipping and falling. Mud jams our weapons.

Oh God, I'm scared!

"Don't go too fast! Stay in line so we get there

together!" I yell to whoever is near.

I know I'm going to die! That knot in my stomach is going to drag me down to the ground. There's the first grenade! Did it get anybody? Our mortars have quit! Now they're gonna' come out of their holes and spray us like bugs!

"There's one, he's throwin' a grenade! Shoot! Kill him! My God, look at them! Fire! Fire! Hit the dirt!"

The only part of the enemy we can see is their arms as they loft grenades up and away from their positions. They throw them as soon as they have armed them. By the time the grenade rolls down the hill, it explodes among us.

Machine gun fire. Hand grenades exploding. I wet myself. Bullets zipping. A thump. The guy on my left is hit.

"Stay down!"

I can't find most of the squad. Somehow a few of us are way off to the right, separated from the rest of the company. The South Koreans with us are scared worse than we are. They've quit climbing and are laying nearly at the bottom of the hill. They begin shooting over our heads.

"What are those crazy gooks doin'? They'll kill us all! Get up here and fight! Get up here!" I shout and wave my arm. They ignore me.

Shrapnel buzzes. Bullets zip.

My BAR jams. I've let mud get in the receiver. I lay on my side, kicking the bolt with the side of my foot. Geraghty is having to do the same with his M1.

Kick the bolt, fire, kick, fire.

I dig in my pouch for a grenade. I have to stand so I can get enough power in my throw to get it past the mound of rocks and dirt that is the enemy's breastwork. We don't want it to come rolling back down on us. I pull the pin, release the handle, and push myself up on one knee. This grenade has a seven second delay fuse. After I count four seconds I put all my strength into the straight-arm throw that seems to work best for me. If I don't get it past the breastwork, maybe it will explode before it gets back to us.

It lands behind the North Koreans' bank of earth. We crawl toward that spot.

A grenade comes rolling down toward a group of GIs on our left. Bam! Screaming! Another man hit!

Geraghty is on my right. Sorenson lays beyond him. A couple yards farther to the right are Sergeant Finner and Lieutenant Brown.

I reach over Geraghty and hit Sorenson's leg. "Ask the lieutenant what we should do!" I yell.

"He's dead!" Sorenson screams.

I can barely hear above the noise.

I yell even louder. "Where's Finner?"

"He's dead, too!" Sorenson screams again.

I push my voice to its' limit. "You sure?"

He doesn't answer me.

I reach over Geraghty and shake Sorenson's boot. He doesn't move. I shout again.

This time to Geraghty. "Geraghty tell Sorenson..."

Geraghty is cursing his rifle as he pushes it down toward his foot so he can kick the bolt. "You .....!"

I hear a pop and the side of Geraghty's head erupts

over me! His brains and blood cover my face and glasses! I can't see anything! I pull my glasses off. There are pink and red splotches all over my glasses and my shoulder. I wipe my face with my hand. It's all over me!

Oh God, no! Geraghty's dead! I'm next! Lieutenant Brown, Sergeant Finner, Sorenson, all dead!

I don't dare raise up to throw another grenade. More North Korean grenades roll down the hill! Bam! Bam!

Kick the bolt, fire,kick, fire!

Where is everybody? They're buggin' out!

I can see men to my left, running down the hill, toward the stream and the trees. I raise up to take one more look around. I know Geraghty is dead. No one near me is moving. I start down hill, angling to the left to find the company. I find Ike and Brown and Woods.

"Let's go!" I yell. "They're all dead up there!"

Now we're going to get it in the back. Bullets splat, splat, near my feet.

"They're getting our range."

Ike and I are passing on either side of a man shot through the neck. We don't say a word as we scoop him up and drape his arms over our shoulders.

"Into the gully! Run! There's a big drop!"

We jump off a six foot drop, land on the run and keep going toward the creek. We hide behind the bank.

Bullets make small eruptions in the wet earth, or sing off rocks into the air! Branches fall! We run down the stream bed.

Several GIs stop us under a bridge and relieve us of the wounded man.

A bridge! We ran all the way to the road we left several days ago to walk into our first firefight.

I can't get my breath! My heart's going to pound out of my chest! My head hurts!

I fall into grass growing in the stream bed. I'm too tired to move. I think I'm going to be sick!

Oh God! Am I still alive? Was I a coward? Would the rest have stayed if I did?

The sun sets behind Hill 174. I sit in a hole on the forward slope of the hill we started from. I don't remember how I got here. I have my BAR and a few grenades. My hole mate is the Old Man. My mind slowly works through a fog of exhaustion. I hope I'm dreaming!

King Company didn't take Hill 174. I know of two dead and at least two wounded in our squad of nine. Three of five close friends are dead. Everyone in the headquarters section of our platoon is dead. Casualties are so heavy, only the front and flanks of our hill are manned. Most of our new South Korean "fellow soldiers" survived. Each GI is paired with a South Korean for the night.

My position is at the left end of the forward slope. The hole to my left is empty. All the holes on the back side of the hill are empty. There just aren't enough men to cover the back side of the hill. I think nearly half the company is gone. If the North Koreans get behind us tonight, we will just have to fight back to back.

The Old Man is all I have to depend on!

Below my hole is the gully that runs down to the creek bed. It is probably too steep for the enemy to use as an attack route, but a few men might use it to infiltrate behind us.

I try to force myself to think. It's almost dark. If we're attacked, we will probably be overrun. Old Man squats in the bottom of the hole. His head is down. He is probably more afraid than I am. I try to scrub the dried blood and gore from my face. I use more precious water to wash Geraghty's brains from my glasses.

I don't think I have enough ammo to last through a night-long attack. I don't know much about the area around my position. I'm not even sure of my fields of fire. Brown and a South Korean are in a hole about ten yards to my right. Too far, but I'm glad it's Brown. I'll be watching our rear while he watches our front. He's steady and a lot braver than me. A good man and a good friend. One of the few I have left.

I poke a finger into Old Man's shoulder. He looks up. I point to the area in front of our hole and wave my arm back and forth.

"You look!" I hiss. I punch him again. I point to my eyes and wave my arm again. "North Koreans! Enemy! You lookee, lookee!"

I pick up his rifle and shove it at him. He stands.

I'm angry, and afraid. I am about to lose my mind. The men I trusted have been taken from me. My life may depend on this man who I don't know, who doesn't know me. We have nothing in common, except our fear, and we have no way of sharing that.

A heavy dew forms. I sit in the bottom of the hole, wet and miserable.

I think about Geraghty, Sorenson, Malool, Sergeant Finner, and Lieutenant Brown. What do we do now that they're all gone? Our squad leader, Sergeant Krause is

badly wounded; hit in the head. Corporal Huckabee was hit, too. There can't be many of us left.

Why aren't they here with me, and these South Koreans, our KATUSAs, dead on that hill side? This is their country! Why didn't they die for it?

I grieve for our men and for myself. How many more of my friends are gone? I shiver with cold, fatigue, and fear. I don't expect any of us to live through the night.

It will be the longest night of my life.

I take over the watch from Old Man. He doesn't need instructions to curl up in the bottom of the hole and to go to sleep. Sounds of movement drift up from the gully and creek bed.

I think about Laura. I have to! I said I wouldn't, unless I was safe, but I must concentrate on her now, or lose my mind.

Oh, how I miss her! We were so happy together! Even the times we didn't agree, were so few and so unimportant. That was six weeks, and a lifetime ago. If I could only wish myself to her. I would lay in her arms, sleep all night, and forget about killing and dying. We are so much in love. She's going to be a widow at twenty!

In spite of, or because of my fear, I begin to get sleepy. I poke Old Man again and put him on guard.

I sleep. It can't be for very long. It's cloudy, so I can't see the stars, but I'm sure I didn't sleep long.

Old Man is squatting at the other end of the hole, asleep! I pick up his rifle and hit his helmet, hard. I shouldn't make a noise, but I'm so mad, I don't care! He fumbles in the bottom of the hole as he wakes to the blow and the noise.

"Get up! Get up! You watch! Lookee, lookee!" I scream. "You're going to get us killed!"

My mind is slipping again! I pull him to his feet and turn him toward the front. Fear and despair nearly overcome me. There's nothing I can do to save myself. Shivering with cold and fear, I begin shaking all over. I'm sure that I'll be dead before morning. I don't think I can stay awake, and I'm convinced the North Koreans will attack or infiltrate our positions and cut our throats. I finally quit trying to keep Old Man awake.

The night has been so long, it has to be near dawn. I chew tobacco and rub the juice into my eyes. The pain is terrible. I hope it will keep me awake. It won't matter if I ruin my eyes; especially if I'm dead.

I spend much of the night figuring out a way to get off the hill, and home. I pray. I make a bargain with God. It's a bargain I repeat over and over again. "Lord, please let me live. If you let me live through this night I'll do anything. I'll be good for the rest of my life."

I know I'm praying like a child, but I have nothing else to offer God. Even though I think that prayer many times, I'm convinced I'm going to have to shoot myself in the foot, to help God save me. I will claim an accident and be taken away from this forever.

Even as I make that decision, I worry that I might cut an artery and not be able to stop the bleeding. There is little chance for a medic to come to me in the dark. But how else am I going to get out of here alive?

Other men have done it. I don't know for certain which were accidents and which were deliberate. One of my friends walked into a bayonet. His leg was cut so

badly, he was sent home. A GI in another platoon shot himself through both legs, with his .45 caliber pistol. If that wasn't an accident, he was real stupid. He's going to be a cripple, maybe even an amputee. Another guy dropped a large rock on his foot. I'm sure he did it on purpose because he told me, when we were still aboard ship, on the day I made corporal, that as soon as he made corporal, he was going to figure out a way to get home. He made corporal a few days before he crushed his foot.

I thought of another person who was a friend. Bergstrom and I have been together since basic training; two years. We're in the same squad. As we lined up in the creek bed, ready to attack Hill 174, he fell on his knees. He cried. He claimed he couldn't climb, that he couldn't even stand. I watched with disgust and fear as Sergeant Finner demanded that he stand and do his duty. Bergstrom hunkered lower, and lower. His helmet touched the ground as he cried and rocked on his knees, begging Sergeant Finner to not make him climb the hill. For a few seconds I thought Sergeant Finner was going to shoot him.

The attack was starting. Lieutenant Brown was supposed to lead the platoon and Finner was to push us from the rear. Our platoon leader started up the hill. The rest of us, except Bergstrom, followed him.

In the hell of that afternoon and evening, I forgot Bergstrom. Brown came to my hole just before dark to check if I was alright. He told me that Bergstrom had been taken to Captain Curfman. He begged the captain not to put him back on the hill. He was sent to work with the mess crew.

I hate Bergstrom, for his cowardice and betrayal of us. It makes all the fun we had together and all the work we did together seem fake, a show, useless somehow. He wasn't really our buddy. He wasn't even our friend. All that passed between us no longer has any value.

All those men dead. Everyone of them better than Bergstrom. I trusted him. He was included in all of the platoon's activities, on duty and off. He was one of us, trained to fight, and taught to protect his buddies, but when the chips were down he had failed me and everyone in the platoon. He broke the cord that binds us together. He broke the cord when it had to be it's strongest; in combat.

Why can't I do that? I'll just tell the Captain I can't take it any more. I'm going crazy. Look at the friends I've lost. Bergstrom got away with it, maybe I can.

Ideas race in and out of my head. As fast as one forms, and I reject it, another takes its place. I point the barrel of my BAR at my foot. I know better than to use my .45. It will blow most of my foot away. Just before I pull the trigger, I decide to wait awhile, until more time has passed and it's closer to dawn. I watch and listen. Old Man sleeps on in the corner of the hole. Occasional shells fall on Hill 174. They're meant to harrass the North Koreans, but they're probably more successful at keeping me jumpy, and awake. I stand in my hole, turning this way and that, at sounds real and imagined. I set my BAR in front of me; prepared to fight. Then as fear blots out reason, I rest it on my foot, determined that a round through a foot is my only chance to live. I decide to wait until sunrise, when I know I can be evacuated.

16September1950

Fog comes with the dawn. With the dawn, there is also an artillery barrage of Long Tom shells on Hill 174. The shelling starts slowly. I can hear individual explosions as they impact several hundred yards to the west. Then, as they fire for effect, the shelling becomes a continuous roar. The barrage lasts through most of the morning. The ground shakes from the continuous explosions.

For some reason, the dawn, or the brain jarring noise, or my own inability to hurt myself, causes me to forget about deliberately shooting myself. Maybe it's all those dead men. I can't be like Bergstrom. I have to go on like my buddies would have if I were dead, and they weren't. Of nine men in the squad, only four are left.

I'm still miserable. I still think I'm going to die soon. In fact, I believe we are all going to die. We'll be sent up Hill 174 again and again until everyone of us is dead in the mud.

Sometime during the afternoon, the shelling stops and P51 Mustangs strafe the hill. Then they napalm it. Then the artillery takes over again. We watch in awe and fear as the pounding continues hour after hour. As night falls, there is no let up.

Brown and I have decided to take turns standing guard. He will be awake in his hole at the same time my hole mate is supposed to be on guard. He had trouble keeping his Korean "buddy" awake, too.

Every time I wake, I find Old Man asleep. Hitting or kicking him awake is routine now. I don't enjoy it a bit. I'm not even angry anymore, but I can't let him or the rest of the KATUSAs think that they can sleep on guard or any other time they feel like it. I pound him awake, again.

17September1950

The blessed light of dawn has finally come. I pray for the dawn so we can stop killing and dying for a few hours. I'm beginning to have mixed feelings about the rest of the day, though. The North Koreans usually come at us after dark, so the night is a continous terror even as we wait for them. We attack in the daytime, so that's when we prepare to die. If we're lucky enough to live through the day, we have to prepare once again for the night with its terror.

The shelling of Hill 174 continues. We move around with our heads between our shoulders, waiting for the next explosion. A short round in the valley, or on the forward slope of our hill, sends us scrambling for our holes.

It's about noon. We have just been told to pack up. We are moving out.

I knew it! We're going to join our dead friends on that steep, bloody hill. Item Company tried it. Love Company lost half its men on Hill 174. We tried, and failed. There have been at least seven separate company assaults. Now King Company is going to try again.

Six green kids lay on that cargo hatch, a few days from war. Three weeks, and four firefights later, three of the six are dead. What chance have the survivors got? This attack may finish the rest of the company.

I close my combat pack and roll my poncho on top. I fill my pockets with essentials; candy, C-rations, letters from Laura, pipe, and tobacco. Perhaps most important is a pair of dry socks in my pocket. My gas mask pouch is full of fragmentation grenades.

We've been resupplied with ammo, so Brown and I spend the morning cleaning our weapons and ammo clips. I carry five BAR clips. Brown carries five more. We each carry two bandoleers of M1 cartridges. We don't have a BAR clip belt for Old Man, but we stuff his pockets with several extra clips and bandoleers. We have enough ammunition to make a potent fire team. All of this means weight; lots of it, but it'll be worthwhile in a long firefight. My weapons, ammo, and other gear total almost 50 pounds. I don't intend to run out of ammo.

My legs are itching again. The more I sweat, the more they itch. Since my last visit to the aid station, an ulcer has formed on my right ankle. My combat boot rubs it as I walk.

The 3rd Platoon moves down the steep gully. Brown and I, followed by Old Man, fall in line.

We form up in the creek bed with the rest of King Company and get ready to assault Hill 174 again.

As we start through the screen of brush and trees, the shelling stops.

The 3rd Platoon is assigned a different sector of the hill for this attack. We're far to the left of the route we took on our first try. There are fewer King Company men to line up in the creek bed this time.

I take one painful step after another.

"Where are they?" Brown whispers as he searches the crest, looking for a target.

"I-I don't know." My voice is shaking as badly as my knees. "Watch for grenades! Help me keep an eye on Old Man."

Any second now all hell will break loose. All we'll

see before we die is enemy arms as they roll grenades down on us, and the barrels of their machine guns as they sweep us off this hill.

I climb bathed in sweat, while my teeth chatter as if I'm freezing.

There is no sound or movement from the crest of the hill. All I can hear is our labored breathing and an occasional curse as someone loses his footing in the mud.

Fifteen minutes later we are on the top of Hill 174. As I climb over the bank of dirt and rock the enemy built, I enter a world of unbelievable slaughter. Bodies of North Korean soldiers -most are only parts of bodies- are scattered everywhere. Limbs have been torn and severed from men, and flung in all directions. Torsos are split and their contents strung on the ground, over boxes and destroyed weapons. Heads are crushed or blown apart as if they have exploded. Much of the flesh on the body parts is burned. The sickly sweet smell of roasted human flesh fills my nostrils.

Had every man who occupied this hill died in the relentless bombardment, or been burned to a crisp as the flaming napalm clung to his clothes and skin?

Were there survivors who held out until they could stand no more, and then having gone mad, ran headlong toward the north?

The scene is too horrible for words. How much more are we going to see and live through before we too go mad? Our brains have trouble accepting what our eyes see, but we're unable to look away.

We stand and stare.

Old Man is squatting to my left rear. His face is

usually an unreadable mask. Now, his head keeps swiveling as he seems to be unable to stop looking at this scene of so many forms of death. His light brown face is pale. The mask is gone, contorted into a clear picture of horror. Like us, he can't stop looking. For the first time, I feel sorry for him. He is no better prepared for this than we are.

First Sergeant Fisk finds Brown and me sitting among the dead, waiting for orders, praying we'll move off the hill and not have to handle the body parts in this nightmare butcher shop. I say a special prayer that we won't have to move the bodies of our dead buddies.

Sergeant Fisk is standing over me. "Corporal Hofsiss, I heard you were with Lieutenant Brown during the attack."

I jump to my feet. "Yes Sergeant. We were down there."

I point with a shaking hand.

"Show me where you were." Fisk orders.

I hand my BAR to Brown and start down the steep hillside. I think of the advantage the men on top of this hill had during our attacks. They didn't have to show themselves at all to throw their grenades. They simply lobbed them over the bank and they rolled down on us. They could fire their weapons and hardly expose themselves.

I wonder if we could have forced our way to the crest in spite of their advantages. If I had stood and charged up the hill, would enough people have followed me? Could we have taken the hill if I had, or would I simply have taken a bullet in the head, as Geraghty did?

I begin to feel lightheaded as I get close to the

bodies of my friends and our Platoon Sergeant. I think I'm going to be sick.

All three bodies have been stripped of some clothing. Their weapons and boots are gone. I take a deep breath and look closer. Maggots are working in their wounds. Our Platoon Leader isn't with the rest of the dead!

"Where's Lieutenant Brown?" I croak. "He was right over there."

I point with a shaking finger.

"He's alive. He was found when we were checking the bodies." Sergeant Fisk says quietly.

Oh, no! Another mistake! I was the ranking unwounded man in the area and I panicked. I should have crawled over Sorenson and checked Sergeant Finner and Lieutenant Brown. I should have checked each man before I bugged out. A wounded man was left alive on that hill for two days. He had lived through that terrible bombardment; the shells and the flames. Had some of the others been alive when I ran down the hill to safety?

Sergeant Fisk continues, "We don't know who these others are. Their dog tags are gone."

My legs feel rubbery so I squat a few feet uphill from Geraghty and Sorenson. Most of Geraghty's face is gone. I can tell that the other body with the gray face is Sorenson.

"That's Sergeant Finner." I explain patiently, pointing to the body on the left. "That's Sorenson, in the middle. This is Geraghty."

I point to each body in turn. It's hard to breathe. Something sour and green is rising from deep inside me. I

feel lightheaded again.

"They'll all have to be listed as missing. They can't be identified. " First Sergeant Fisk turns away.

"I can identify them, Sergeant!" I cry as he turns his back and starts up the hill.

He turns again, putting his hands on his hips. "No! Only an officer can identify bodies without dog tags, or other ID."

I begin pleading as if I'm begging for their lives. I point at the sickening body without a face, that had been my friend. "Sergeant, I can identify Geraghty! He was talking to me when he got hit! This is his blood all over my jacket!"

I pull at my brown-spotted lapel.

I want to say "brains" but it won't come out. My voice is rising. I'm breathing faster.

I want to grab the First Sergeant and shake him! I want to make him believe me, for my sake as much as theirs. I was here when they died!

"Sergeant, this is Pfc Geraghty! We were together a long time! We were buddies!" My voice is nearly burned away by the raw juices that rise from my stomach and spill over into my throat.

His hands drop to his side. "If you can get an officer to identify the bodies, they'll be listed as killed in action. Otherwise they're missing."

Lieutenant Brown has been evacuated. He could have identified Sorenson and Finner, but he probably wouldn't have known Geraghty. He had been our platoon leader for only two weeks.

I don't see Captain Curfman anywhere on the hill.

He's the only officer I'm sure could identify Geraghty. Geraghty stood in front of the Captain, and was chewed out more than once. Captain Curfman is proud of knowing his men. He might even identify these men on my word. But it isn't to be. The captain is nowhere in sight.

It's almost like being back in the firefight. My friends are dead. I can't do anything to help them. It seems their dying was wasted, since I can't get the army, our army, the army they died for, to acknowledge their deaths, and recognize that they did their duty. It's as if they ran away, disappeared, just like Bergstrom.

I take a last look and climb back to the top of the hill.

What's left of King Company is spread out on the hilltop. Brown and I are given a position on the forward slope. We sit down near an empty foxhole. A few yards away, near the wall of earth and rock, lays a dead North Korean soldier. How can we sit and relax, surrounded by the sickening aftermath of more than a week's slaughter? I don't know. The smell is one that I will never forget. Rotting flesh mixed with blood, urine, burned wood, gunpowder, and cordite, and always, the smell of the paddies.

Perhaps the sights and smells are just too much for our tired souls to accept. We sit and talk quietly as in a funeral parlor. The sight of what had been our friends makes this untidy butcher shop no more horrible than their corpses. The American bodies are not as scattered as these, but they are just as dead.

We eat our C-rations, and for some perverse reason I stare at the dead Korean. Am I trying to prove that I

don't feel anything? That I have no problem staring at a horribly burned and mutilated human being and can go on eating? Do I want him to know that I'm glad he's dead? I'm angry at that dead man, all the North Koreans, First Sergeant Fisk, the army. I have no reason for living now, except to hate the people who caused us to be sent into hell, and will draw us into hell again, at the first chance.

As we leave the hill, I deliberately step on the dead soldier's chest as I climb over the parapet. The sound is satifying. Childish? Maybe even disgusting? I guess it is, but I feel a certain satisfaction now that I've done it.

I can tell that I've begun to change. I can't put a label on it, or list the ways I've changed, but I'm different.

When Laura and I married, I thought life was going to be great. We would finish my service in the Army, and enjoy being with our friends until I was discharged. Then, to Texas and our wonderful future. Now we're separated by half a world, and I'm no longer an insecure boy. Now I'm a frightened, tired, filthy, soul-sick killer who has seen most of his friends die, and is convinced that he is going to die, too. Even the news of the marines landing at Inchon doesn't raise my spirit. Maybe my legs are hurting too bad.

We cross the Naktong River on a floating bridge. I step into the water to cool my legs. We've broken out of the Pusan Perimeter, but the only joy I feel is the cool water on my burning, itching legs.

We meet the rest of the 3rd Battalion on this, the main road to Seoul. We begin marching north, walking on the edge of the road, ready to hit the ditch at the first shot.

We see more dead Koreans and destroyed equipment. Our situation had been so desparate only a few days ago. Along this road is evidence that the North Koreans paid a very high price for the pressure they put on us. Dead soldiers are scattered over the fields, on the hill sides, and in the ditches. Artillery and strafing has destroyed whole units before they could reach the front lines. Tanks, trucks, and crew-serve weapons are scattered on the road and in the paddies on both sides.

20September1950

Last night we slept on a hillside just off the road. Brown and I dug a not-so-fancy hole. We could hear artillery and rifle fire, but only in the distance.

Shortly after first light we hear and feel the frightening rumble of tanks rolling up from the rear. We relax as U. S. tanks and trucks move through our positions. Soon they're lined up in the road as far as we can see. On the order to "mount up", we climb aboard. Some of us are ordered on to the tanks. Others are told to mount the trucks scattered between the tanks.

We are now part of a flying column, racing toward Seoul to link up with the Marines and the 7th Division pushing south from Seoul.

A layer of filth is accumulating on my body. My skin is dried and cracked. Every crevice is filled with dirt; not just dust, but black dirt mixed with body oil and sweat. I don't shave or wash very often. Water is too precious. Sores have appeared wherever clothes or equipment rubs against skin. My feet are blistered. I change socks as often as I can, but I have to use the same two pair over and over. They are stiff and dirty because I can't wash them. When it rains, both pair get wet. Finally, the socks begin to disintegrate. The ulcer on my right ankle has eaten its way to the bone. I pack it with toilet paper. Now dust adds to my misery.

We bounce against the steel hull of a tank for hours, clinging for our lives, fearing a track might snatch a boot or pant leg and drag us under or throw us into the path of a following vehicle. The possibility we might doze, fall off, and be crushed by the next tank or truck, causes us

to keep a "death grip" on anything available; even each other. There are few handholds on a tank.

We're better off when it's our turn to ride in the trucks, but not much. The wooden benches bruise our backsides and legs. Dust is so thick, breathing is uncomfortable, even with handkerchiefs over our faces. We sit with our heads bowed, weapons between our knees, packs on our backs, ready to unload in seconds. If someone has to urinate he stands at the tailgate while two men hold him by his pack straps. On the tanks, we wait till they stop or we wet ourselves. No one stands on a moving tank.

Danger is possible from any direction. Mines may be buried in the road. We are traveling so fast that we are bypassing whole units of North Koreans. They could be on the hills near the road, where they can snipe at the column, or even launch an attack. One man on each tank keeps watch. Two men do the same on the trucks.

We still have our Katusas, but can't afford to put them on watch. We still can't be sure they know what to do.

23September1950

Each company takes a turn at being point for a day. The lead rifle squad rides the third tank in the column. This gives the lead squad a chance to hit the dirt if the lead tanks come under fire. The two lead tanks can manuever without worrying about the men riding outside.

Each night we hear shots and shelling. So far we've been lucky. There have been no night attacks and no roadblocks to knock out when we are on point.

Every time the lead company finds a roadblock, they spread out on both sides of the road and try to develop an attack to knock it out.

It's getting tiresome. Every time the tanks stop, we deploy to both sides of the road, ready to mount an attack, or defense of the column. We have to take all our gear off the tanks every time, because we don't know when the tanks may have to manuever.

Tonight, Brown and I have been chosen as a listening post for the battalion. Two-man teams are sent out in several directions. Ours is due West of the battalion. Our post is about a quarter mile out. Another pair of GIs are sent on the same line, a half mile out.

It's almost dark as we start. The four of us follow an irrigation dike, carrying our weapons and a field phone. We drag a roll of communication wire behind us. When we've stepped off a quarter mile, Brown and I stop. The other two men continue along the dike.

We scrape a shallow hole, lay down alongside the dike, and listen. We try to stay quiet. As the evening becomes full night, all the sounds around us magnify. Every sense is primed. We can smell the dirt, and the

parched grass. As the dampness rises from the paddy, the smell of human waste fills our nostrils and almost causes us to empty our stomachs. This is the closest we've been to this oriental form of fertilizer. We're laying right in the middle of it, but there is no place we can go.

Sounds come from the grass -crickets, rats- who knows? We hear our clothes move and noises from our equipment that we don't usually notice. It's impossible to be absolutely quiet.

We don't go through our usual routine of positioning our grenades and extra ammo clips between us. We want to be ready to move out in seconds.

Orders are to call the company CP every fifteen minutes during the night.

Neither of us sleep. We take turns whispering our reports into the phone, but we both listen all night. We dare not miss a scheduled call to the CP. If we do, they will call us, activating the whistle on our phone, and announcing our position to the world. Our best defence is silence and staying awake. The only deliberate noise we make is the brief, hissing whispers of our reports.

Actually listening posts are very useful. If the men detailed to lay out in front of the perimeter don't answer the phone whistle, it is very likely they are asleep or dead. Of course the battalion goes on full alert. God help the men who fall so soundly to sleep that they don't hear the phone whistle!

I spend the night convincing myself not to panic, call the CP, and bug out for the company perimeter. I worry about the guys in front of us, too. What if they panic

and we end up shooting them, or they shoot us? If we do have to bug out, will we be able to enter our own perimeter without getting shot?

We're lucky. Nothing happens, except that we spend a very scary, very damp, stinking, sleepless night.

The CP allows us to come in at first light. We wait for the two men who have really been out on a limb all night. The four of us drag ourselves through a dense ground fog, to the battalion perimeter. As we think we are near the company perimeter, we begin to speak sentences with the call sign in it. After only a few sentences, we hear the countersign. A few more steps in the blinding fog and we are inside our perimeter. Dawn seldom breaks clear in the "land of the morning calm".

Brown and I spend the day on a bucking tank, trying to hold on and sleep at the same time.

25September1950

It's King Company's turn. We lead the column today. Being lead company has some advantages. There's no dust, and there's much less starting and stopping at the front of the column. Of course there's also a greater chance of getting shot.

A shell fired from an NK antitank gun, several hundred yards ahead of us, brings the column to a halt. The shell misses the lead tank, and explodes in a bank of earth behind it.

We slide off our tanks and dive for the ditch.

Our new platoon leader, Lieutenant Hopkins, is up in seconds, running into a paddy to the left of the road. Ike has already flopped behind an irrigation dike, looking for a target for his bazooka. I throw myself in the mud nearby and prepare to fire. This is where the BAR shines. Our targets will be three to five hundred yards away. There is a solid base for the bipod.

Lieutenant Hopkins yells, "3rd Platoon, follow me." as he runs into the muddy field, above the dike.

We're on our way to defend the left flank of the column and get into position to attack the right flank of the enemy roadblock. At least this is one of the tactics we practiced at Carson. Ike stays where he is. His targets are likely to be on or near the road. No enemy tanks are going to appear in this muddy field. The platoon machine gun is set up on the dike near Ike. The rest of us follow the lieutenant. Thank God, he lets us do what we know to do.

We line up behind the dike. We are now facing the hill that is the right anchor of the enemy roadblock.

The lieutenant yells again. "BARs give us cover!"

The platoon's three BAR teams stay behind the dike and begin putting rounds into the hill. The rest of the platoon runs across the paddy toward the hill.

I take my time. Adrenaline is pumping. I'm excited, but in control. I also watch that none of our men cross my line of fire. Firing short bursts, I keep putting rounds on the sector of the hill I think is mine. Brown and Old Man take a breather.

The tanks are moving forward very slowly. North Korean antitank shells continue to hit around them. No mortars, no artillery, no bullets of any kind have been fired at us; only the antitank gun firing at the lead tanks.

The platoon flops into the mud behind another dike, about two hundred yards closer to the hill. The lieutenant waves the BARs forward.

We are well out into the field, between the dikes, slogging through mud that sucks at our boots, and smells like an open latrine.

The first mortar shell lands to my left.

Survival improves your hearing. That is, if fear doesn't dominate your brain. When a mortar shell is going to land near enough to do harm, you hear a high pitched scream for less than a second. I begin to hear high pitched screams that come so fast they overlap one another. Mortar rounds are landing everywhere.

We try to run faster. The shrapnel thickens. I can hear it buzzing around me. Brown is just behind me on the left. Old Man is keeping up pretty well. We're all carrying close to 50 pounds. We cover just over half the distance to the platoon when we all start to breathe hard. The dike

ahead isn't going to give us much protection, but it's our next objective. Taking mortar rounds in an open field is about as vulnerable as we can get.

We try to discipline ourselves to run into the storm of shrapnel. We run in a zig zag pattern to throw off the aim of North Korean riflemen. They may begin firing any time. Shrapnel is pinging off my helmet like hail. Flying metal tugs at my clothes and harness. We dodge the small craters fearing we might turn an ankle. My infected ankle is painful. I hobble, trying not to put my full weight on it.

Finally, I've had it. I can't dodge anymore. We're all exhausted. I know it isn't the smart thing to do, but we all decide to go to ground at about the same time.

My helmet falls forward as I throw myself down, while holding my Bar above the mud. I have promised myself I will never again have my piece jam from mud or dirt. My glasses are knocked off, and my helmet ends up an arms length in front of me. I bury my face in the stinking mud, gently holding my BAR out of it. Though it's clean and loaded, it's useless against the storm of mortar shells.

A screaming shell behind me; hot metal zips overhead. Some of it lands on my clothes. Pieces warm the gagging mud near my face. Another shell lands among us. Another chance for the mortarmen to score. More zipping metal and still no screams. I know my luck must be about to run out. Lightning is bound to strike soon. A shell explodes in front, to the right, then the left. No pattern, just the slight difference of each shell's shape or weight. Panic is about to take over. Which way to run?

How can we dodge that much metal? I curl into a ball and fight for control. The smell of the mud is sickening. I want to throw up, but I would gladly bury myself in it to get away from the shrapnel and the short unearthly scream that announces each shell. How long can I lay out here before a shell finds me? There is only so much ground around me. I whimper. I don't want to die!

Why does the enemy seem to wait for me to show myself and then drop all he has to try to kill me? I know that's not true, but deep down in my gut, I wonder.

I crawl forward a few inches, feeling for my glasses. If I can't find them, I'm dead. I can't see without them. Ah, I find them. They're unbroken except for the left nose-piece. I lay there exposed, gritting my teeth. I'm determined to survive, willing the shells to miss me. I dare not raise my head to check on the others. Mud and shrapnel still fall like heavy rain.

After forever, the mortar fire switches to the other side of the road. The first and second platoons get it.

We're up in seconds. The rest of the platoon cheers us on. "Come on! Run! Go!"

They have been relatively safe. The mortar fire was concentrated in the middle of the paddy.

I clamp my mud-filled helmet on my head and charge the dike. In just seconds I lay with my head below the dike, looking back at the churned up paddy, gasping for air. How is it possible none of us were hit? Why didn't we run sooner? We could only do the possible. Right or wrong, for us it was impossible to run through that shower of death.

Without thinking I reach into a water-filled hole

below the dike and slosh water on my head and face. My throat is dry from running, and from fear. I scoop up another handful of water and drink. It's thick, and sour, and wet. It's wet! I drink again!

After I've swallowed several handfuls of water, I realize what I've done. My canteen is empty, but that's no excuse for my stupidity in breaching water discipline. I'll be lucky if I don't come down with something that kills me. Fear does horrible things to thirst, and thirst does horrible things to common sense. Something else I'll have to pray for.

Lieutenant Hopkins yells again. "Up an' at 'em! Walking fire!"

I'm scared, but I'm angry, too. I can barely see out of my streaked glasses. I fire from the shoulder. The 20 pound BAR weighs nothing. I stop and fire kneeling. I walk again, firing from the hip, clip after clip. A few North Koreans are dying in or near their holes as they defend their positions.

Suddenly the situation develops. Tanks move up the road and through the cleft in the hills. Enemy soldiers abandon their positions and begin to withdraw up the hill. We're killing them in the open with little return fire. This is more like it! My exhaustion and fear are gone. Right now nothing can hurt me, and I wouldn't care if it did. I'm paying back some of the fear and sorrow these people inflicted on me and my friends. I'm in a killing mood! It feels good!

Dead Reds lay on the hill side and along the road.

Several men in our platoon are wounded.

We're back in the death business. Death becomes

more commonplace with each firefight. There's a certain sadness when we see dead GIs, but no real grief unless he's from our small circle. Enemy dead are regarded only as a threat removed. For some reason, wounded on both sides are pitied, to the point that we offer them cigarettes.

After we search all the dead and check their foxholes, we wait for the tanks to get ready to move on.

Once again the adrenaline quits flowing. The ache in every joint returns. We are tired as old men. Huddled together along the road, we wait for our muscles to relax as the adrenaline drains from them. My boots, my uniform, my face are crusted with the mud of the paddy. I make no attempt to scrape it off. We don't mind sitting close to each other. We all smell the same.

26September1950

We are taking back the road the North Koreans used as they raced to the Naktong River. They overran the South Korean Army, and decimated the first US units they met. There are burned out hulks of American tanks, knocked out by the heavier Russian T34s. There are also T34s destroyed by satchel charges, grenades, or American planes.

The column stops for a break. Flank guards are sent out on both sides of the road.

Someone finds the bodies of fifteen or twenty Americans lying in the roadside ditch. They have probably been there for two months or more. They are nearly reduced to clothed skeletons. I walk over to look. Curiosity, and I hope caring, bring me and others to the edge of the ditch. None of the bodies have boots or dog tags. They are lying close to each other and even on top of one another. Someone leans down as he realized these are not ordinary casualties.

"My God! These guys have their hands tied behind their backs!"

Men soon line the ditch. Each of the skeletons has communication wire tied around his wrists. They've been shot in various places. Some probably died slowly.

"Damn them! I'll get an officer." Brown growls as he turns away.

As we drive northward, many American dead are found.

There may have been hundreds who surrendered, and were shot after being tied.

We bounce along on our tanks or trucks and curse the enemy.

"How could they do that? That's cold-blooded murder!"

"They didn't have a chance! They must have thought they were safe, with their hands tied. It didn't look like any of 'em tried to run."

One by one we offer an opinion and even try to devise reasons for what we've seen.

"I guess they couldn't decide what to do with our guys. Maybe there was only one gook on guard and he panicked.

"Sure! Sure! Those guys were real dangerous tied like that! They don't plan to take prisoners!"

"Well I'm not takin' any prisoners either!"

"No prisoners?"

"Hell, no!"

27September1950

One day at a time I'm becoming a different person. I'm no longer moved by much of anything.

Then today dawned. The day of miracles! It's been a month since we landed at Pusan. Except for a few dips in the creek near the artillery battery, we have seldom washed ourselves.

We dismount our trucks in the middle of a regular camp. Our company mess crew has set up the kitchen. Huge shower tents are waiting for us. We line up in platoon formation and wait. This time we don't mind. We lay against our packs, smoke, write letters, nap, do nothing, and try to believe we don't have to worry about mortars, snipers, or attacks.

I can't believe what I'm seeing! I'm under a roof for the first time in weeks. So what if it's canvas! Pipes are tied just above head height, and shower heads placed at intervals in the pipe.

I shed all my clothes near the door.

I look at my body, and get the shock of my life. I've lost a lot of weight, but more frightening is the condition of my skin. My feet are covered with blisters. My right ankle has a large, infected ulcer, oozing pus. I can see the white of bone. Both legs are covered with open ulcers between my ankles and knees. The rest of my skin is layered with a crust of dirt, body oils, and sweat. Every crack and crevice is filled with oily filth. There are raw spots wherever clothes or harness rub against skin. My broken glasses are gouging a hole in my nose. The sun has blackened my head, neck, and hands.

I wait in line with my fellow scarecrows, clutching my razor and soap, standing behind, and in front of, men

who look enough like me to be my twin. Once I get used to the sting of soap and water on my skin, I scrub with my rough hands until most of the dirt has flowed from my body and through the pallet floor. I allow the hot water - yes, hot water- to wash away some of the fatigue, fear, and grief!

On leaving the shower tent, we enter another tent where we are allowed to choose clothes to replace the rotting mess we dropped when we entered. Clean clothes, new clothes; two pair of clean socks; what more could we ask for? Before this day of miracles ends, we have mail call, sick call, and two hot meals.

I register for sick call and get another shot of penicillin for my infected legs. The medics put a gauze compress on my nose and my ankle. I return to the company. The gauze is too tight in my shoes. Before the day is out I have to remove them and pack the holes with tissue paper again. The rule for evacuating only men with combat wounds is still in effect. We spend the rest of the day lazing in the sun, cleaning our weapons, reading our mail, and trying not to think about tomorrow.

28September1950

By the time we have been on the road one morning, our wonderful shower and clean clothes are only a fond memory, but other good things can happen.

The column has stopped for some reason. The tanks and trucks sit vibrating and grumbling like leashed hounds, eager to get back in the chase. We roll, slide, and jump off the tanks every chance we get.

Hanging to handholds that are practically nonexistent, and bracing feet against slippery steel, or another man's back, soon causes muscles to cramp. When we leave a tank, we take everything with us, since the tankers often take off without a word. They don't have anything against us. In fact, I've had tankers tell me they like to have us around for security at night, and to cover their blind spots during an action. But they do get nervous when they're sitting still; sitting ducks for any antitank gunner with half an aim.

We take the opportunity to empty our bladders. That, in itself is funny to watch. Imagine men, by the hundreds, along the edge of a road, trying to hold on to weapons and packs while opening several buttons, trying not to wet themselves, and hoping to get through before the column starts moving again.

Old habits die hard. In a small gesture of modesty we stand facing the ditch. In front of us is a long slope that begins gently, near the road, and then gradually becomes steeper, peaking at a rocky ridge about a half mile to the west.

Men begin to point. Just below the rocky ridge, three men can be seen moving toward us. When they are

first sighted, everyone tenses. Some flip the safeties off their weapons. Others drop to one knee, prepared to fire. The three men approach us at a strange loping gait. The men on the outside are slightly stooped, as the man in the middle leans heavily on them. They stop about a quarter mile from the road. The man in the middle waves. He looks like an American. His clothes are ragged. They look like faded fatigues. The others wear typical Korean clothes; white baggy pants, short waisted, white shirt.

We're ready. Infiltrators in civilian clothes, and other tricks by the enemy are common.

They continue their strange lope toward us.

The man in the middle shouts. "Hey! Hey! I'm American!"

We relax a little; only a little. The two Koreans begin to wave. Both of the American's legs have sticks tied around them. Suspicion eases to watchfulness and is finally replaced by wild, almost crazy cheering.

Several men run to relieve the Koreans of their burden.

The American was a member of the 24th Division. They had been overrun in late July. Both his legs were broken by shrapnel. The Koreans with him, and others, had hidden him from the North Koreans, and cared for him for two months.

An ambulance drives up from somewhere in the column and takes the three men to the rear.

Our platoon is digging in on a hill that meets the road in a narrow cut. Refugees have been passing us all day, heading South. Several men from the company digging in on the other side of the road, are checking the

civilians through our lines. The refugees are bunching up as they try to move through the check point and get away from the danger of being so near American troops. The GIs are in a hurry, too. They want to get the Koreans checked through so they can get their foxholes dug before dark.

For some reason one of the men stops an old man and woman. Both have full A frames on their backs. The GI checks their loads. All the other Koreans in the crowd move to the other side of the road, wanting no part of the incident that is about to unfold. The old woman is calm, stoic, as is the old man. When their packs are uncovered, she is found to be carrying a North Korean radio. The old man is carrying a case of grenades. From our hole near the top of the hill we can see everything as it takes place. .

A few GIs on and near the road shout. "Kill 'em!"

I'm busy digging a foxhole, but I think: why not kill them and be done with it. Maybe that would be a lesson to the rest of these people.

Cooler heads prevail and the old man and woman are taken to the rear in a jeep.

Those people were either threatened or rewarded for their dangerous work. They probably didn't come from North Korea. It wasn't patriotism that caused them to be willing to infiltrate our lines. I doubt they could have walked from North Korea, but these people are unbelievably tough. You never know.

We've heard much about infilitrators and also about crowds of civilians being used as human shields.

Whoever is in charge at the check point decides to close the road from the North. A tank rolls up between

the hills and all traffic is stopped. The civilians move back a little, sitting off the road, muttering their hissing, clicking, grunting language most of the night.

We're uneasy, not knowing if we are going to end up in a firefight with the white clothed "civilians." Will the people be forced to move back into the road to absorb our fire, and provide cover for a North Korean unit behind them?

The night passes quietly, easing into the usual foggy dawn. Our foxhole is eye level with the top of a cloud. We can hear the refugees gathering on the road. Tension builds again as we wait and wonder if the North Koreans are going to attack behind the refugees, under cover of the fog.

The fog lifts and the refugees are allowed to move through our lines.

I wonder what the rest of them are carrying besides babies and quilts.

Somehow a few replacements catch up with us. Lieutenant Hopkins reorganizes the platoon. I'm given the 4th squad. I'll be promoted to sergeant. I'm glad for the promotion, but I'm not too happy about the added responsibility.

I'll miss living with Brown. We're a good team. Brown and I found that we can depend on each other no matter what's happening. It's going to be tough to not have Brown's strong back and heart to help me through the tough times.

I knew I didn't need to look around in a firefight. Brown was always there protecting my back, as I was watching his. The best of it is that he will probably be

promoted, too. I'll probably hole up by myself most of the time now.

I loved my BAR like she was my woman. When possible I cleaned her morning and evening. I kept her muzzle covered and sheltered her from the weather. I slept with one hand on her stock or held her in my arms. I can disassemble and assemble her in the dark. As the most essential things I carry, I have in my pocket small pieces of rag and a can of oil to keep her bright and oiled inside and out. She was always ready to do her duty when I needed her. The only time she failed me, was when I allowed mud to get into her receiver. I vowed to never again let any of my weapons malfunction because of dirt. Even though my .45 saved my life, I never felt the same about it as I did about my BAR. Brown will take good care of her.

My new squad, except for the KATUSAs, is a standard infantry weapons squad. As a fighting unit, we're not in the best shape.

I discount the South Koreans as fighters. I try to keep in mind that they were taken off the streets of Taegu and have no idea what they are supposed to do. Like Old Man, I'm afraid they won't or can't learn by example.

Three GIs are green replacements. Billy Whirlwind is a transfer out of Japan. He was in Korea in '48. That may prove to be an asset. Five of us have seen combat, but we're tired. The best thing about it is that Ike and I will be in the same squad.

I don't want any of these new guys for friends. I've lost enough. Ike, Brown, and I are all that's left of the original group. I'll do my best to take care of everyone in our squad, but I don't need any more buddies to lose.

06October1950

Today we entered Seoul, the Capital City of the Republic of Korea.

We have passed through many towns and villages since we went on the line 25August. Every one of them was flattened to the ground or burned to cinders. Seoul is as bad as the worst of them, only bigger and more so.

The fighting to take the city has been over for more than a week, but the streets are still nearly impassable.

Rain raises the smell of what was recently burned, and mixes it with the familiar smell of human refuse and death. Every once in a while I see a corpse, rotting in the wreckage. The cement dust churned up by the shellfire and collapsed buildings makes the road slick and dangerous for trucks and tanks. We're somewhat relaxed, but two men on each vehicle are detailed as lookouts. There is always the possibility of snipers and stragglers.

We are still on the main route the North Koreans took to invade the South. We are covering ground that has already been fought over twice since 25June.

We wear handkerchiefs or towels wrapped around our faces to cut down a little on this new kind of dust.

08October1950

The sun has set. It's nearly dark.

The battalion is formed up well out of sight of the Imjin River. This is one of the few times we have bunched up like this, in possible mortar range of the enemy. It can't be helped. Each man has to be in touching range of another GI. We are about to make a night assault across the Imjin River.

Our instructions (we've actually been given instructions) for this night assault across the river are even more frightening than the possibility of being shelled. The first wave is to assist the engineers in dragging 16-man assault boats to the river. We will then launch the boats, cross the river, where we will be met by a ranger scout, who will lead us to the top of the bluff on the north shore.

This is the last natural barrier between North and South Korea.

During our briefing a few questions were allowed.

"Are there enemy troops on the top of the bluff?"

"Probably."

"Do we wait for the whole battalion to assemble at the foot of the bluff?"

"No." Climb the bluff as soon as you get there."

"Is the enemy dug in?"

"We don't know."

It sounded like a typical snafu operation.

It's several hours after dark. We receive the signal to go. The night is so dark that we literally can't see our hands in front of our faces. We stumble and slide down to the water; sixteen men to a boat. There are a few

paddles in the boat. The rest of us use our rifle butts as paddles. The river is running high and fast.

The North Koreans are bound to hear us.

Boats bump into each other. Men curse. Now and then there is yelling as a boat capsizes. We're wet, cold and scared. There is nothing to do but keep paddling and praying. As soon as we feel the boat hit the bank on the north side of the river, we leap into the water and slam into a bluff.

Someone contacts the ranger by feel and hissing whispers. The rest of us join up by hanging onto the pack straps of the man in front us. There is no order. If one takes a wrong turn, everyone behind goes wrong. There is no way to know if we're moving with men from our squad, or even our own platoon.

The North Koreans can wipe us out at any time.

After sloshing in water for a few minutes, we climb a very narrow trail. We reach the top. This time God has answered our prayers. No shooting greets us. There are no sounds except the sloshing water in our boots and the pounding of our hearts.

We spread out along the bluff and wait. We have no order to move beyond the bluff. We stumble a few yards and lay down. We shiver through the night.

By whispering very softly, I find most of my squad. We set up the machine gun and wait for dawn. As usual, dawn and ground fog come at the same time. When the fog lifts we find that platoons and even companys are mixed together.

Some GIs never made it to the shore. We had no life jackets. Most of the men who were thrown into the

water were pulled down by the weight of their equipment and drowned in the flooding Imjin.

Definitely a snafu operation.

09October1950

I don't believe it! I don't believe it, but I know it's true. We're in North Korea! The 1st Cavalry Division has crossed the 38th Parallel.

Our column of tanks and trucks is waiting for a ROK division to pass through us. I guess they are to have the honor of making the charge on Pyongyang.

Back on the trucks and tanks, we head north behind the ROK division.

We have been warned that we might be greeted by stiff resistance from enemy troops, or even from civilians. It's a wonder we haven't shot several women and children by mistake, as they waved and shouted to us. The apples they threw to us could easily have been mistaken for hand grenades.

It's impossible to tell if the local North Korean civilians are really glad to see the ROK soldiers and our GIs. I expect they figure out which army they see coming, and cheer for the soldiers who are winning today.

Whatever their reasons, we enjoy the delicious apples.

12October1950

We have been racing North on the main road to Pyongyang

This morning we turned east on a one track road. We traveled most of the day eating dust and trying to keep our eyes on the hills. We haven't seen a live North Korean soldier in days. I can't believe they will give up their whole country without a fight. I've always been a worrier, but I'm still a long way from home and plenty scared.

We stopped before sunset and set up a perimeter around a medium-sized village. I guess the whole battalion is here. There are several tanks with us, and a battery of artillery.

As usual, we haven't been told why we turned off the road to Pyongyang. But there was a great deal of discussion among the squad as we bounced along the rutted road.

" We're goin' out here to protect the right flank of the ROK divisions and the rest of the 8th Army, headin' for the capital." is the most popular rumor.

We are seldom told where we are or what we are supposed to do before the shooting starts. It makes me feel like a puppet on a string.

Our guess should be as good as any. We've all seen maps and some even show the position of X Corps in the East. What's left of the North Korean Army could be anywhere between us and the Tenth.

We spread out on the low hills around the town and dig our foxholes. Pretty standard stuff for the last month. Artillery and mortars register their guns.

13October1950

We stayed put. By afternoon, rumors were spreading through the battalion.

"The road behind us has been cut!"

"The gooks have surrendered!"

"We're the right flank of I Corps."

"We're going to link up with X Corps, coming from the East Coast."

"The rest of the regiment is behind us."

Things look troubling to me; not bad, but troubling.

Most of us have one meal left of our C-ration. We are to use water only for drinking.

I have always thought that our lack of flank protection on these headlong charges would get us trapped or ambushed one of these days. Even though I hate being a listening post in front of a perimeter, or at the point, I know the extra danger to a few of us is necessary to possibly save the rest of us. That's the way I feel about using flankers.

For some reason no one has asked my advice. I guess the brass doesn't want to hear from a eighteen year old sergeant with only two months combat under his belt.

It's late afternoon and I'm concerned about food. I send two of the squad into the village to look for food. If they are stopped, I tell them to say they're on a detail to get the squad's C-rations, and "Please sir, can you tell us where the ration dump is."

Headquarters doesn't like people wandering around, especially the lower ranks, unless they are on a detail. Our men returned without C-rations, but they brought us

the strangest looking rations I've ever seen.

They place in front of me, several small sacks of rice and several odd looking fish dried almost past telling they are fish.

I ask where they got these "rations."

"We found ourselves in a building that didn't have a door, so I figured the stuff didn't belong to anybody." Collins says, with a straight face.

"We can get you plenty more, Sarge." Haynes adds with a grin.

Whirlwind has a pretty good idea about how to eat Korean food, and he speaks Korean and Japanese, so he is quickly promoted to head chef. The Koreans in the squad will cook under his direction.

It works pretty well, but the fish is almost impossible to chew. The rice cooks down to a mess like glue. I like my rice with brown sugar and raisins. Under the circumstances I have to settle for two packets of sugar.

Some of the men won't even try it. The rest of us eat it, and wonder if we are really cut off.

It's night. We can hear shelling in the West; the direction of the main road.

Then someone thinks he hears shelling in another direction. Then it's all around us, but still far off.

Our artillery and mortars throw a few shells into the night. I don't know if someone called for a fire mission or if they are just practicing.

Now we're getting edgy. A few shots are fired and it spreads from one hill to another as our nerves fray.

In the darkest hour of the night, one of the new guys in our squad hisses through his teeth. "Sarge, throw a

grenade out there! I can hear 'em talkin'!"

I haven't convinced the new men to carry plenty of grenades; or they leave them in the bottom of their backpacks, instead of having them handy, on the dirt piled in front of their foxhole. I ignore him until I'm afraid he's going to give our position away. What if there really is someone out there? Who knows, new guys can hear, too!

I raise up and put all I have into the straight-arm lob that I've found sends a grenade the greatest distance.
We don't hear any screams from the dark, but firing erupts all along our hill. It stops after a few minutes. I feel kind of foolish, but no one asks "who's the idiot who started that shootin'?"

After a third day of rumors and rice, we load up our tanks and trucks and head west, back to the main road. We never do find out if we were actually cut off.

Something has stalled the drive. We're allowed to move back into line right behind the ROK division that is leading the assault on Pyongyang.

17October1950

I spent most of today, my birthday, huddled in the corner of a truck. I'm 19 now, goin' on 69. If I can stay out of any more firefights I may make it home.

The days are getting shorter and the weather is getting much colder. We roar northward in a single column of tanks and trucks. The air is cold enough that we take turns sitting on the floor of the truck, out of the full force of the wind. When we rotate to ride the tanks, we take turns riding over the engine in the rear. We choke on dust every day until it rains, then we shiver under our ponchos as tank tracks and truck wheels shower us with mud.

We finally drive out of the hills and see some flat land. Trucks and tanks line the road in front and behind us.

We turn east on another rutted and barely usable road. After several miles we dismount and form a line of skirmishers facing north.

It looks like I'm definitely not going to receive a birthday present of no more firefights. Oh well, it was a nice thought.

We are in an area of rice paddies as far as we can see. Artillery and mortars are setting up on the south side of the road. We are definitely going into action.

Lieutenant Hopkins gives us what information he has. It's more than usual, but not much. We are to move in a line of skirmishers and begin walking north until we come to a river. We will wade the river, climb a railroad embankment, and attack Pyongyang from the southeast. Several divisions of ROK troops are to attack from the

south and southwest. I wonder if this is going to be the last big battle. Will they fight to the last man for their capital?

Lord please don't let me be killed in the last battle of the war!

We eat C-rations and smoke, waiting for the order to move out. The fields are muddy. Even in the cool air, the smell is still there. I guess if we stay here and live long enough we'll get used to it.

The order comes down to "move out."

We walk through the stinking mud for several hours, always keeping an eye on the irrigation dikes ahead. The North Koreans often place their one-man holes next to dikes. They are hard to see, and if we aren't watchful we won't know they're near until a spray of bullets from a burp gun cuts one or more of us down.

After bouncing around on tanks and trucks for several weeks, stretching our legs feels good. But we have to keep in mind that this isn't a walk for our health. Somewhere in front of us is a line of resistance. Surely they have saved men and ammunition for a last stand here.

I still limp because of my infected ankle. I pack the hole there, and the one in my nose with toilet paper. Some of the ulcers on my legs are drying out and I get to change my socks more. My pack and weapon still chafe my shoulder and back, even when I ride.

As we continue our advance toward the river, we begin receiving fire from thickets of willows on an island. We all go to ground as artillery shells answer the challenge for us. We still can't see any enemy.

Lieutenant Hopkins orders us up and forward. "Fix bayonets! Keep moving! Keep your interval! Fire when you have a target."

I know he's trying not to sound excited for the benefit of the new guys, but he doesn't have to sound downright disinterested.

I hate to hear the order to fix bayonets. That's getting too close for me.

I traded Brown for his M1 when I gave him the BAR. I know it's in good condition. Brown is that kind of soldier. She's my M1 now and I try to treat her the way I treated my BAR.

The fourth squad isn't going to get a pass this time. We move along with the rest of the platoon, but the ammo bearers and the crew-serve weapon teams, get to move along behind the skirmish line. They have both hands full, so they are allowed to make a second rank. Ike is carrying his Bazooka. The two tubes that make up the weapon are joined together. His assistant is right behind him carrying a rocket. Whirlwind is in the front line also, carrying the 30Cal. Machine Gun by it's handle. Bates is walking beside him carrying a box of ammo. Our machine gun is loaded and ready to fire.

Whirlwind is a strange guy. One minute he's a gloomy Indian, next he's telling some outlandish joke. He and Bates seem to be two guys I can depend on. The only time I've seen a machine gun fired from the hip was in the movies. Whirlwind may show it done again today.

I'm in the front line, too. I'm not carrying any ammo cans today, so I have no reason to remove myself from the front line.

We hear machine gun and rifle fire from the island but still can't see anyone. We wade into the river, not knowing how deep it is. The bottom is solid and never gets above my waist. The water is cold!

As we move across the island we see several men break from the willows and splash to the other side of the river. A few of them don't get through the hail of fire we lay down. The lucky ones reach the other side, scramble out of the water, over the railroad embankment and disappear. Quite a few North Koreans die in their holes, and on the gravel surface of the island.

Surely this isn't their main defense line.

We spend the night on the island. It's a cold, miserable night. We're wet and all we have for cover are our field jackets and ponchos. We left our packs in the trucks. We have to sleep outside our shallow foxholes because they fill with water as fast as we dig them.

18October1950

Even as the first bit of light allows us to see more than a few inches in front of us, fog delays full dawn past sunrise.

As soon as we can see a few yards, the order is passed along the line to advance; same as yesterday. We will wade the river on the north side of the island this time, then we will climb the railroad embankment. We don't know what is on the other side of the railroad, but it seems likely to me that the enemy will make us pay for it, if only to delay us. Pyongyang has to be close.

One artillery shell whispers overhead. The report of its impact comes from somewhere beyond the tracks. Thank God it's "outgoing mail."

Soon the whisper of 105mm shells passing overhead is continuous.

We're in the river again. The water seems even colder than yesterday.

The crack of 90mm and 76mm tank guns, firing at the railroad embankment, hurts my ear drums. The sound of those flat trajectory shells is so sharp it would cut off my hand if I reach up to touch it.

Machine guns, fifties and thirties mounted on tanks and trucks to our rear, begin firing over our heads. We receive fire from holes on the river side of the embankment.

Please God, raise all this support fire before we get to the railroad!

Enemy mortar and machine gun fire meet us as we come up out of the river. Every weapon has it's own sound. The enemy's large machine guns give off a pok-

pok-pok sound. We flinch, as all along the bank can be heard, the brrrp, brrrp, of Russian burp guns. As the bullets and shrapnel fly around us, men are going down, leaving gaps in our skirmish line. We can't even take time to stop and help our buddies. We shout back and forth above the noise, trying to keep our courage up.

"You can't watch your feet!" I yell. "Look up!"

I can't watch to see if the new guys are listening to me.

We're near the railroad embankment now. Up to now the North Koreans holes on this side of the tracks have been almost invisible. As we move closer we can see heads and weapons above the holes. Small puffs of smoke come from their weapons. Other North Koreans are firing from the top of the embankment.

"Keep moving! Everybody keep moving! Fire! Don't just walk! Shoot!" our officers and NCOs shout.

I can feel noise drilling into my head, the vibrations pushing up from the ground through my body; explosions, guns, shouts, screams, everything.

We begin the climb up the high railroad bank. We've done pretty well so far, but getting over the top is going to be the hard part.

Whirlwind is actually firing the machine gun from the hip! There are still enough of us standing to finish the enemy on this side of the railroad.

It would be so easy to duck down and be safe for awhile. Why can't we just stay here below the top of the embankment? I pitch a couple of grenades to the other side.

"Up! Don't stop!" Lieutenant Hopkins must be

reading my mind.

Our thin line of skirmishers scrambles to the top, over the steel rails, firing in a frenzy at everything that moves. There are holes here, too. I fire into a hole below me. It's empty. I start down the bank and stab a man as he tries to claw his way out of his hole. The bayonet comes out clean. I barely hold my balance as the gravel takes me on a wild slide to the bottom of the bank. As I turn away from the dead man, I bring my M1 up and fire at a running figure. He falls.

We are at the bottom of the bank. I take a deep breath and sink to one knee. I'm shaking again. I feel as though I haven't taken a breath for five minutes. Maybe I haven't.

Everyone is firing as the enemy runs toward a road lined with huts. Whirlwind sets up our machine gun on the tracks and pours lead into the enemy running down the road and ducking behind the huts. A few aren't faster than his eye and reflexes.

There were plenty of holes near the road. If the enemy had stayed in them, they could have cut us to pieces as we climbed over the railroad tracks. In minutes they're gone. There is still plenty of noise from our guns as artillery and mortar shells land in the road and among the shacks in front of us.

It was a short sharp firefight, but I can't believe it's the only challenge the enemy will make for the city. Maybe the major effort is to be on the main road where the ROK divisions are.

The day has barely started, but I'm tired already. My hands tremble as I light a cigarette.

"Saddle up! 3rd Platoon, move on down the road!" Hopkins yells as he passes us. He isn't about to let us relax.

By the time Whirlwind has taken the gun off the tripod, the squad is bringing up the rear of the platoon. That's where we're supposed to be unless we're given other orders.

We haven't done any street fighting so far, but may be experts by nightfall. Surely, somewhere, the gooks will really fight us again, as they had in the Perimeter and at the road blocks.

I feel better about some of the squad. Two of our reservists saw action in WWII. Billy Whirlwind, did a 3 year tour in South Korea after the war. He speaks the language. I'm a little afraid of him, though. All he talks about is how he knows how to have a good time with Koreans. He is a big, big man. He could squash me with one hand. I don't know what I would do if he decided to refuse to take one of my orders. I'm tall and skinny, and I've been losing weight ever since we left Carson. I'll bet I'm down to 130 pounds by now.

I hope this firefight has changed some of the new kids. They're not alert enough. They've seen several men die, but I have to keep reminding them to keep their heads down, or scream at them to look around and get their heads from between their legs. What did they learn in basic training?

We walk up the road at a pretty brisk pace. A little too brisk for my liking. I keep reminding everyone to watch the huts and the dikes in the fields. As we walk, the artillery keeps ahead of us. Not a barrage, but I figure

they're adjusting their fire as the FO moves with us.

Firing of all kinds can be heard from the west and northwest. I hope the ROKs are wiping the NK Army off the map. Tanks come from behind and pass through us.

The huts are closer together and the fields are disappearing. We even see a few real houses made of wood, with walls around them. Then we enter a part of the city where some of the buildings are concrete. There are even some stores. Artillery, and bombing, have damaged most of them. It doesn't look like this is going to be easy. Those buildings could be crawling with North Koreans.

Fourth squad does get a break. We are weighted down with so much ordnance, we can't run around clearing buildings. We wait in the street. The machine gun and bazooka are set up at every street corner, then taken down and moved to the next intersection. We fire a few rifle rounds at shadows in windows. I'm glad we don't find much to shoot at.

There is some firing inside buildings and in alleys between streets. The streets we're clearing have no snipers or roadblocks.

It's midafternoon, and we are standing in the middle of a wide boulevard. It's completely empty. Some of the buildings are badly damaged. Others aren't hurt at all except for pock marks from bullets and shrapnel. Everything seems dark gray; the buildings, the road, everything.

The enemy is gone. It looks as though the city is ours.

Men begin yelling from inside the buildings and are soon running into the streets, their arms loaded with food in cans and boxes. The North Koreans and Russians left a few goodies behind.

Captain Curfman doesn't waste any time collecting the food and liquor, found in what we take to be the Russian Embassy. We don't get to see much of the booze, but everybody in the company shares in the food. If we eat only part of this we're going to be sick.

Just before dark, Lieutenant Hopkins sees to it that everybody who wants one, gets a slug of liquor. It's barely enough to warm the gullet, but a real morale builder.

19October1950

After a good night's sleep in a building, the 3rd Platoon is redeployed. We have no sandbags to protect us in the street. We have simply set up our machine gun and Bazooka in doorways on opposite sides of the street. The ammo bearers will not be needed to carry ammo, so I assign them to pair up and have one man on guard in several windows. I wish Ike and Whirlwind had more protection, but it can't be helped. They have to be where they can see down the street.

I'm sitting at the top of a flight of steps that leads to an alley, at the rear. One man is guarding the rear. I'm sitting in the rear door, writing a letter to Laura.

I glance up from my writing, and see someone look around the corner of the building and then duck back out of sight. I look at the guard as I reach for my M1. He has seen it too. He aims his rifle at the spot where the head had been.

Thank God, he isn't trigger happy. A little girl pokes her head around the corner, again. She has the biggest, darkest, saddest eyes I have ever seen. She looks to be 9 or 10 years old, but I can't tell the ages of these people. She doesn't act afraid, just curious.

Obviously she hasn't read or heard the news that she should be "sacrificing her life to fight the evil Americans." That's really not funny. I'm thankful we haven't had to fight women and children.

The guard raises the barrel of his M1 just enough so he isn't pointing directly at her head. We both smile at her.

Moving slowly, I pick up a box of tea biscuits and walk down the stairs. The tea biscuits are part of the loot

we liberated yesterday. Still smiling, I open the box so she can see what's inside. I close the box. She looks as though she's disappointed until I hand the box to her. She looks at us for a few seconds, her black eyes as big as tea cups, then she turns and runs down the alley.

A few minutes later she returns with a middle-aged man. She is still holding the box of tea biscuits. He bows toward us three times, then taking the box of biscuits, he holds it at arms length. I shake my head and point at the little girl. I turn my palms up and move my hands in her direction. The man begins to speak and shake his head. His face is very solemn. He obviously does not want her to keep the biscuits. I don't know what to do. I have broken some rule of courtesy and don't know how to set it right, except to take the box .

This is one of the few chances I've had to do a kindness to a child, and I don't want to give up too easily. I tell the guard to stand fast, as I run to get Kim. He speaks enough English to communicate with the man, and with us. Through several minutes of negotiations we come to the compromise that the girl will be allowed to keep the box of biscuits if I will come to their house for a meal. I agree. He points to the first door on the left in the alley. Through Kim, I tell the North Korean that I'll be there soon. Somehow, Kim translates this. The North Korean nods, and with his child he walks down the alley.

To be sure of the directions, I watch him until he gets to the door of his hut.

I go inside to tell Ike where I'm going. He thinks I'm crazy. I think so too, but I feel it's something I have to do. I have to find something good in all this. I have to do it for

me.

On the way out I look in my knapsack and find a pack of cigarettes.

As I walk on the cobblestones of the alley, I might well be walking back in time a thousand years.

The house is the usual mud and straw hut. It is sandwiched between two concrete buildings. I knock on the door post and wait. The door is made of paper, framed by wood. It slides back, and just inside is the little girl. She bows as I step over the threshold. I think about removing my boots, and decide against it. The Koreans seem not to notice. The father stands next to an older woman who is seated. On the other side of him, a woman stands in front of a small fire. The man speaks several words to me, I think. They all bow and I return it.

The room we stand in is the entire house. A raised portion along the back wall has several quilts laid out for sleeping. In the center of the room is a low table. The younger woman goes back to cooking over the open top oven, using a clay bowl.

We kneel around the table and share a meal that would be very little for three. We each have a fried rice pancake, a piece of a large green radish, a small bowl of soup with very little taste, and a tea biscuit. If anyone is nervous about my rifle leaning against the edge of the table, they don't show it. The man offers me a small cup of rice wine, which I refuse. He urges me to drink and then leaves it in front of me.

The old woman brings out a clay pipe. I hand her a tin of Prince Albert pipe tobacco. She takes it with a slight nod of her gray head, and just a hint of a smile. I offer a

cigarette to the man, and light it for him. This seems to truly impress him. He comes close to smiling as he puffs on the cigarette. He then turns it over in his fingers studying that tube. It must be a kind of tobacco he has never had before. The old woman fills her pipe with tobacco and hands it back to me. We three smoke.

I think the old woman feels that since she and I are smoking a pipe, we are a bit more dignified than the man. I wonder what she would think if she knew that I'm only 19 years old.

When I get up to leave, they all bow again. I give the man my pack of cigarettes and the pipe tobacco to the old woman. They graciously accept the gifts, with great dignity and many bows. Not an understandable word has passed between us, but we have communicated all that was needed.

If I live through this, I will always remember those three grown people, and that little girl, bowing to me as I backed out the door of their home. I did not feel as easy as I would in most homes in the US, but I will never feel more welcome.

God granted a short period of civility in what seems to be an eternity of hate and killing.

21October1950

I guess the brass figures if we stay in one place for more than a day, we'll take root.

Our battalion is guarding the roads in and around Pyongyang. We finally got a break. The CO of our regiment, Colonel Crombez, is military commander for the city. We get to be his police force.

The ROK troops and several US divisions are north of here finishing off the last of the North Korean Army.

Our post is a check point on a secondary road that leads Northwest out of Pyongyang.

Our machine gun is set up in front of an empty house. We can see several hundred yards up the road. The Bazooka is set up in another front yard across the road. Both foxholes for the weapons crews are dug in shoulder deep. We have plenty of rice straw mats for camouflage and to line our holes. The ground is beginning to freeze, and the mats make good insulation. They are very bulky to carry, but are nice to have when we find them.

The rest of the squad is in holes behind the houses. Not exactly a strongpoint, but there are plenty of troops nearby if we need them.

We man the roadblock to stop any enemy troops trying to enter the city, and to check all North Koreans. We have already had a problem when ROK troops have tried to come through us, heading south.

Luckily, we've been allowed to keep Kim with us when we're on duty. His translations smooth things out every time.

Kim is several years older than us. He claims to

have been in the Japanese Army. He is useful in two ways. He speaks English as well as Japanese and Korean, and he knows how to act like the man in charge. An invaluable trait when facing down Koreans, civilian or military, North or South.

It is probably the coldest morning this season. There is a heavy frost and fog that reduces visibility to less than 50 yards.

Out of the fog, we see four men walking beside an ox cart. Kim walks into the road, hands on hips, commanding them to halt. They continue to approach. Kim shouts a second command in Korean. It sounds as if he's hissing and spitting at the same time. We don't understand the words, but there is no mistaking that Kim is giving commands. Every man in the squad raises his rifle or carbine and sights on one of the Koreans around the cart. Then Whirlwind slams the machine gun bolt home. There is no mistaking that sound. Kim orders them to raise their hands and come in one at a time. The man in front says something to the man behind him. I tell Kim, to tell him to shut up or he's dead.

I'm not sure what we've got, but I know there could be a whole battalion less than two hundred yards away, out there in the fog. I'm tempted to give the order to fire and put an end to what looks like a dangerous situation. We have no reason to care about these men. They are almost certainly our enemies. Why not?

Instead, I tell Kim to tell them to all come in right now with their hands up, or we will kill them where they stand. We will at least have them and their cart close enough so we can't miss. I tell the squad to finish all of

them if one makes a wrong move.

We all have our bayonets fixed, so we can probably stop them if they try to close with us. We begin searching them. The first man has a pistol under his shirt. The rest have no side arms. I'm getting plenty scared now! I scream at Kim to have them lay down on their bellies, and keep their hands over their heads.

The ground is cold, but that's tough. The prisoners are very stoic. Could be this is what they were hoping for.

I assign four men to guard them, with orders to empty a clip into each of them, if one of them moves. Kim repeats my orders in Korean.

The rest of the squad is sent back to their holes. Ike and Whirlwind know that their responsibility is the road.

We have a telephone to the company CP. I report what has happened and ask for an officer to come to the roadblock.

As it turned out there was no battalion out there in the morning fog, but those infiltrators were dangerous. They had a wheeled machine gun -it was at least a fifty caliber- broken down on the cart, with several boxes of ammo.

I can't say if I might have waved them through if it had been full daylight. They might have even convinced Kim that they were refugees, but I doubt it. They were on the road too early. There were no women or children with them. The cart wasn't filled to overflowing with household goods.

Several jeeps with MPs came up and got all our prisoners, including one which led the ox and cart to

headquarters.

It took a while and several pipe loads for my heart to slide back down into my chest and my hands to quit shaking.

25October1950

We've been in this war only two months, but it seems like I've been at it all my life.

We have been trading off roadblock duty with other platoons. We are at the road for eight hours, then sleep in cinderblock buildings on a university campus. We still have to mount a guard at the university. But what a world of difference from being on the road and being shot at!

We get two hot meals a day but, if we're not at the roadblock, we have to make company formations, inspections, and would you believe, combat training. I've spent part of several days training replacements in the art of throwing grenades. My preference for grenades must have reached our new CO. Curfman is now at battalion HQ.

An officer from battalion is in charge of the training. I do the easy part of demonstrating the most effective way to throw grenades. We are using dummies most of the time, but at the end of each session I throw a live one to give the replacements some idea of how they sound. I can't believe they haven't had grenade training in basic.

Today the 3rd Battalion will have a memorial service for all the men who have been killed or are missing.

We stand in a block, in company front formation as our battalion commander, Colonel Treacy, speaks of the men we have lost. The mimeographed program for the service has the names of all the men killed or missing since we went on the line 25August. We have lost 52 men killed and missing, of approximately 900 who boarded the General Pope in early August. Colonel Treacy reads the name of everyone. I'm glad to hear the names of

Geraghty, Malool, and Sorenson. At least they are being counted as having been in the fight. But I'm still mad over them being listed as missing when I know they're dead.

Someone must have identified Sergeant Finner. He is now listed as dead. At least his wife won't have to spend years wondering if her husband is dead or a prisoner.

King Company has lost 13 men killed and 3 men missing. Just looking around at the company, I guess we have 60 to 80 men wounded. That's 35 to 45 per cent casualties for King Company alone!

That's what two months of war has done to us. It seems to me that the memorial service is a fitting end to this "police action."

I don't know how many have been wounded or killed in the last two weeks. We received replacements, but the company is still short of the 200 men and 6 officers we should have on our roster.

Ike thinks, since the war seemed to be winding down, we might be among the first men out of here, even if the whole 1st Cavalry Division isn't shipped back to Japan. Not that we're better than anybody else; just lucky. We're survivors of the battalion that got here 24August, so he hopes we'll be some of the first men out.

I'm a worrier. I figure the survivors will be kept in the line as long as they last. The head honchos wouldn't want to waste all the experience we have under our belts. We're what some might call "battle hardened veterans." If we're sent home, who's going to teach these green kids when to duck?

We were issued yellow scarves for the memorial service. Our First Sergeant told us to keep them clean

because we would be wearing them for our victory parade in Tokyo. Ha!

The major rumor for a week or so has been, "Tokyo by Thanksgiving, home by Christmas." We even heard there were troop ships at Chinnampo waiting to take us to Japan.

01November1950

All of our hopes have suddenly come crashing down. Rumors have made a complete about face. We are hearing that divisions of Chinese troops are hitting the ROKs on our right flank. These aren't worn out survivors of the North Korean army or small bands of "the Chinese People's Volunteers." These are full divisions of fresh Chinese Communist troops, at least one full field army, attacking with plenty of artillery and mortar support. They rolled right over the ROK divisions.

We have suddenly been rushed to mount trucks for a fast trip North.

We dismounted late in the afternoon. A freezing north wind is blowing. Why does it seem that we always dismount to set up a perimeter in the late afternoon, or even in full dark? I'd rather mount up before daylight and have time to know where we are and what we are supposed to do before dark. Of course that might mean that someone at regiment would have to get up before daylight or even stay up all night! Hasn't anyone told the brass that the gooks usually attack at night?

We are on a hill next to the road that runs from Kunu-ri to Unsan. The 3rd Battalion of the 8th Cavalry Regiment is surrounded in and around Unsan. We are supposed to keep the road open as an escape route. Other units of the 5th Cavalry Regiment are pushing on toward Unsan, but so far they haven't been able to break through to the 3rd Battalion of the 8th Cavalry Regiment.

We are waiting for the 8th Cavalry to escape down the road to Kunu-ri. The Chinese have blocked the road North of our positions. Now, elements of the Fifth Cav Regiment who have gone North to help the 8th Cav

Regiment, are also trapped. Word is this road is the only one out of Unsan.

This must be the whole Chink Army. After they chewed up the ROK divisions on our right, I guess they are making a push out of the mountains to cut us all off, and take back Pyongyang.

03November1950

We set up roadblocks and dug in on the hills on both sides of the road. Some of the rescue units have passed through our positions heading South. They can't break through to the 8th, and the Chinese are so thick around Unsan the 5th Cav units who were supposed to be the breakthrough units were in danger of being cut off.

We just got word to be ready to move out in 30 minutes.

Riding trucks is getting to be dangerous. Wrecks are seen all along the road. Most of them have skidded on ice and left the road. The really bad sign is that they seem to be abandoned. If the trucks are in country too dangerous to send in wreckers, it's too dangerous.

We are almost back to Kunu-ri. The drill is the same. We set up to try to hold the road open for the 8th Cav to escape through, and at the same time be ready to block the road if the Chinese follow them.

05November1950

This isn't the best place to be, but it could be a lot worse. We could be part of the 3rd Battalion of the 8th Cavalry Regiment. Now that would be a lot worse.

Only a few vehicles of the 8th Cavalry have passed through and there weren't many men on each vehicle.

King Company is dug in on a hill on the east side of the road. It crosses a river just north of our positions. Our squad is on a point of the hill that overlooks the road and part of the river. A definite ridge forms this northern point. It is so narrow that only one man can walk on it, but the east and west sides of the hill aren't very steep. It's going to be easy for the Reds to charge up the sides.

Iocolano and his Bazooka team are on the road side of the point. The squad's machine gun is right on the point. Whirlwind has a good field of fire looking right down the ridge and his gun can cover almost 90 degrees on either side. My hole is just uphill from the machine gun and a few yards to the right. I've decided to have one of the KATUSAs in my hole.

This is our second night on this hill. We've had time to dig past the frost line. Our holes are deep. We even found rice stalks in some sheds near the road. They make good insulation.

There hasn't been much traffic on the road from Unsan. A few tanks acting as rear guard, a couple of jeeps back from a recon patrol, have gone south, but none from the 8th Cavalry. That's bad! If the 8th Cav vehicles were going to make it out they should be here by now.

There's just enough snow on the ground to reflect what light there is from the moon shining through the

clouds.

Suddenly, we hear a few notes from a bugle.

It's late enough that we're beginning to feel the cold. We're on 50 per cent alert. Some of the men who aren't on guard have crawled into their sacks. One of our strict rules is that no one fights while inside his sack. I whisper up and down the perimeter for everyone to crawl out of his sack.

We hear another bugle call. Those few notes, which we begin to hear from several points of the compass, raises the hair on my neck. The call sounds exactly like the first notes of Taps. The echoes from the surrounding hills don't help. They seemed to be calling to each other.

I grip my weapon tighter. All the trembling of my knees isn't from the cold.

Then we see our new enemy. They come on foot, over the bridge, and on both sides of the road. Some of them wade across the river, into the whitened field below our hill. At first there is only one rank. They aren't in a perfect line of skirmishers, but pretty much one line of men. Whistles are used to direct the men in line. Then a second line appears ten or fifteen yards behind the first. As they partially dress their ranks after scrambling out of the river, and crossing the bridge, a third rank appears. They're still only dark shapes moving at a rapid walk across the snow dusted paddy toward our hill. Their noncoms blow whistles and they break into a trot.

"Hold your fire!" Lieutenant Hopkins yells.

No fear that his voice will let them know where we are. This is definitely not a probe or a patrol. They are coming for us.

Some of our squad's holes face the road, and some face the field and the river. All the men in my squad can hear me, but I yell for the new men.

I yell several times. "Hold it! Wait!"

"Sarge we can't wait! They're almost here!"

"Wait!"

Rank after rank of the enemy appears out of the darkness of the river bed. They trot across the bridge and spread out across the road and bar ditches.

Oh, how I wish I had my BAR!

How long? How long will we wait?

Thank God for the company mortars. Someone has called for an artillery fire mission, too. A few trotting figures fall out of the enemy ranks as shrapnel from the first mortar and artillery shells cut the enemy down. As the howitzers and mortars fire for effect, larger gaps appear in their ranks.

The recently quiet night erupts in sound. It's impossible not to flinch.

The artillery and mortar shells explode among our new enemy. It's odd how they fall in every possible position. Some men crumple as stiff paper might fold and bend as it gets wet. Others fly through the air, and slam against the frozen ground as if thrown by a giant hand.

They aren't at our positions yet, but new ranks continue to appear out of the darkness. Mortars and 105mm shells aren't turning them back!

These fresh communist troops, dressed in quilted uniforms and winter caps with ear flaps, will soon be close enough to meet the grenade I'm ready to throw. I have a dozen, or so, lying in the snow on the edge of my

hole. I pull the pin on the grenade, take my stance, ready to throw at a group of the enemy on my left front. I loft it as far as I can.

Did Lieutenant Hopkins yell "Now!" just before, or after I threw that first grenade? I don't know, but I couldn't wait another second!

It lands just behind four or five Chinese. A couple of them go down, but I'm not sure if shrapnel got them or bullets. I can't waste time trying to calculate.

The sounds of their screaming is really rattling the new guys.

Suddenly we're peppered with grenades. The lieutenant let them get too close! Everyone is yelling! The first rank of Chinese melts into the snow as every gun on the hill fires, and they walk into our hand grenade zone. Our machine gun cuts through the second rank, thinning it out. Whirlwind tries to keep his bursts to a few seconds, but when he does, several of them get close enough to pitch grenades. His bursts get longer and longer. He has plenty of ammo, but I know the machine gun barrel must be getting hot. Riley is going to have to rub the barrel with snow. He'll have to expose himself and I'm sure the snow isn't good for the temper of the barrel. We have a replacement barrel, but this is obviously not the time to change it.

I wish somebody else had these responsibilities.

I try to match the rythmn of my firing to the time between bursts from the machine gun. It doesn't work. I simply have to fire as fast as I can at any upright Chink in front of me.

The Korean soldier in the hole with me is brand new to the company. That's one of the reasons I took him

in with me. He knows how to load his M1, but that's all he knows. He puts the barrel of his weapon over the edge of our hole. Holding his head down, he pulls the trigger eight times, as fast as he can. As the clip flies out, he pulls the weapon down into the hole, loads another clip and repeats his method of firing.

I suddenly realize why I'm hearing eight shots in rapid succession.

I scream at the top of my voice. "Stop! Stop! Stand up!"

I pull him up by his jacket collar. His helmet rolls down the hill.

God! Now I'm really scared! We're about to be overrun and nearly a third of our company has no idea what they're supposed to be doing.

I can't take time to try to train this Korean who doesn't speak a word of my language, nor I his. I tell him again to stop, jerk his rifle from his hands, push him down in the hole, and go back to firing.

Something strange is happening out on the killing field. The survivors in the second rank of Chinese stop to pick up grenades still in the hands of dead or wounded men from the first rank. We are cutting them down even as they stop to pick up grenades. They sometimes have to run to two or three of the downed Chinese to find a grenade. Most of the men in the second rank have rifles, but it looks like the first rank is armed only with hand grenades.

The enemy soldiers keep coming, yelling, throwing grenades, firing rifles. I can tell now that most of the third rank is unarmed. At least they don't have rifles. It's crazy!

The third rank stops to pick up rifles and grenades from the dead and wounded of the first two ranks.

Scattered in every rank are men with burp guns. These may be the noncoms. I make a special effort to kill them. Maybe that's not a nice thing to do, but we are going to have to use every trick we can to keep from being overrun.

Our mortar shells begin to creep up the hill toward us, as our mortarmen adjusted their fire as close to our positions as they dare. Every once in a while shrapnel zings off past me, or splats into the dirt around my hole. As our mortar shells begin landing among the fourth and fifth ranks, the enemy breaks. Whistles blow and the surviving Chinese turn and run down the hill, through the exploding mortar and artillery shells. We keep firing until our only targets are dark shadows lying on the snow. The artillery concentrates on the bridge as the enemy survivors are funneled into the road where they make a juicy target. Bodies begin to pile up where the road and bridge meet. A few more minutes and the bridge is jammed full of dead and dying Chinese.

I cringe as I watch the slaughter. I pull my gaze away. I have to warn my men to watch the bodies of the ChiComs lying in front of us. I want to make sure none of us is shot by wounded Chinese.

Suddenly everyone is talking. Many of our men have just been in their first firefight. They can't shut up as the adrenaline and tension drains from their muscles and the stiffness and pain hits their joints. I suddenly realize I'm cold. I shiver, making my teeth chatter.

I want a cigarette, but I've already yelled at Collins

to "douse that match." It wouldn't look good if I light up. I bite off a hunk of gritty Brown Mule and savor the nicotine rush.

As everyone gets quiet, we can hear the wounded Chinese all around us. Some of our green men get uneasy as sounds drift up from the wounded ChiComs in the field and around the bridge. Some cry, some moan. Every now and then one screams through clenched teeth. No one answers.

There will be no leaving our holes until full daylight. At that time we'll take care of our own wounded before we start to check the enemy.

The lightly wounded Chinese have gotten away under their own power, or with help from a buddy. Those left behind will almost certainly be dead by morning. The cold and wind will drain their body heat, speeding up their dying.

Whenever a wounded enemy soldier is found, the medics work on them and try to save them as they do us. I resent this at times, but I've not shot a wounded communist soldier yet. Even so, I approach them with my rifle trained on them and constantly look over my shoulder as we inspect the dead.

I can't kill one minute, and feel badly about the men I shoot the next. It simply doesn't work. Life is too terrible as it is. After a firefight, I squat in my hole and ignore the cries of the wounded. How else can I stay sane in the midst of madness and slaughter?

I'm not getting to be a tough customer, but I am losing some of the feelings that I had when I got here. I don't worry about what others think of my actions. I do

try not to make too many stupid mistakes. I see the green replacements watching me. I wish the KATUSAS would do the same.

We had a few wounded, but they were treated by our medics as soon as the firing stopped. As soon as it was light the wounded were taken to the road, and then to the nearest aid station.

I've decided that I'm not going to hole up with a Korean again unless I absolutely have to. I'm also going to be sure to arrange it so anybody who has to hole up with a Korean will also have another GI in the hole with him.

I am sick about these men being wedged in between GIs and hurting our chances of survival.

The order that put KATUSAs in our units came from Eighth Army HQ, but it was wrong. I know that many of the units who were put in the line last summer were cobbled together from all kinds of outfits, but not the 3rd Battalion. We were a trained, compact unit. Most of us had been together for many months. We had at least gotten to know most of the men who were transferred into the battalion to fill our roster. Most of them came from other units at Carson, and had the same training as King Company.

Every company has been bled white against battle hardened North Koreans. Wedging totally untrained South Koreans between GIs who trusted each other did nothing to help our effectiveness, and I believe it did a great deal to reduce it. I think it got a lot of our men killed. Our officers have to know how we feel. I say that, because the old troopers like me don't hesitate talking about the KATUSAs.

As far as I know, even the American replacements that I couldn't stand personally, haven't been cowards. I have rarely seen a KATUSA doing a soldier's duty in a firefight. One of the South Koreans named Kim, who claims to have been in the Japanese army, is an exception.

I think it would have been better for the Korean rookies if they were put in ROK units.

It took a while, but the green GIs finally realized fighting was the only way to stay alive, and they quickly began imitating those of us who have survived so far. Very few Koreans pay any attention to what we try to teach them, or what they see us doing.

13November1950

Day after day we move from hill to hill. We are thrown into areas where ROK troops have retreated or been wiped out, leaving roads from the west and northwest open all the way to Pyongyang.

Most days we arrive at a road junction or river crossing early enough to dig in and have some idea what is in front of us for fields of fire and places the Chinese could use to infiltrate our perimeter. Some days it's already dark when we unload from tanks or trucks and climb a hill. I sure feel exposed lying in the open with only the frozen mist between me and the enemy.

Night after night we wait for the Chinese to come charging out of the dark, frozen mist.

The Chinese hit us again and again. They use the same tactics as they did at the bridge above Kunu-ri. They hit at night with rank after rank of men charging our positions, trying to overwhelm our firepower; living bodies that have to be stopped before they get close enough to crush us with their numbers. When their human waves are stopped short of our holes, and we are cutting into their fifth, sixth, or seventh rank, they retreat into the bitter cold night.

Tonight, probably the coldest so far, we're preparing for another human wave attack.

We're on a hill about a half mile north of a road. There is an open field separating our hill from a river. The ground is covered half knee deep in snow, and the river is frozen solid. This afternoon we watched ROK troops retreating along the road. By late afternoon it was empty. There's no one between us and the Chinese.

I try to get myself prepared before dark. I put on all the clothes I own. My feet are reasonably warm, encased in two pair of dry socks. The two pair that are wet with sweat, are tucked in my arm pits. I'm standing on my folded shelter half, and my new sleeping bag is rolled up in a corner, tied with a strap so I can quickly throw it over my shoulder. I've buttoned every button and tucked in every opening to keep the wind out.

All but two of my grenades are lined up on the edge of my hole. Those two are hooked into my web harness. If I have to leave in a hurry I'll at least have two grenades. I have 20 clips of ammo; 160 rounds. These are in my cartridge belt and draped across my shoulders in bandoleers. My bayonet is on my rifle. It's a lot of weight to stand around in, but I'm determined to have what I need for a chance to survive if we are overrun.

I've been preparing like this every night for about two weeks.

I try to make sure all the men in my squad carry as much ammo as possible. I have always worried about the possibility of running out of ammo. We've heard stories of firefights ending with bayonets and even sticks and rocks. There were a couple of times we came close to running out.

We will be in big trouble if the Chinese can break through any part of our perimeter at a time when most of us are out of ammo.

If I have to break out alone or with a few men, I'm going to be ready.

It starts with bugles. They make quite a production as bugle answers bugle, over and over. Those few notes

that sound like Taps, echo from hill to hill before they die in the piercing cold. The tan figures walk onto the ice of the frozen river and trot across the field.

Our mortars don't wait until the enemy is coming up the hill. They hit them as they come out of the river bed. I don't hear our artillery tonight. Fire missions elsewhere, I guess. Our mortarmen drop shells down the tubes as fast as they can. I hope they have plenty of shells.

It sounds as if the entire perimeter is being hit! The chinks are really determined to break through tonight!

Our machine gun has a good field of fire and Whirlwind is using it well. He tries to fire at groups to get the most effect. He and Riley, his assistant, are good. Just when I think something is wrong because he hasn't fired for what I think is too long, the machine gun laces the night with a string of bullets that seem to knock down a whole rank of Reds.

My hole is just inside the perimeter, to the right-rear of the machine gun. The firing is continuous now. We can only hope the mortars are thinning the enemy ranks enough for our rifles, BARs, and machine guns to keep them outside the perimeter. Their ranks hit us like waves, and each wave is breaking higher on the hill.

We all begin screaming! Hard as we try, there aren't enough of us to outscream the Chinese.

It's hard not to give in to the impulse to crouch in a corner and cry for someone to save us.

There is no let up. As soon as one group or part of a rank is cut down, another rank takes its place.

I get down on my knees, resting my elbows on the

snow. I'm shaking from cold, fear, and excitement. They are coming so fast we can't get them all. As a clip empties and flies out of the chamber of my M1, I grab a grenade and stand up. I make sure I throw it far enough so there is no chance of hitting our men. I lean against the back of my hole and push another clip into the chamber. The bolt flies shut.

As I lean forward, I see a Red nearly even with the hole on my right. I fire sending him spinning away. He comes within inches of falling into Collins' and Harris' hole before he rolls on down the hill.

I look back to my left. A Chinese soldier armed with a rifle is already past the machine gun hole and is turning to get behind it. I can't fire! I might hit Whirlwind or Riley. I jump on the seat I dug in one end of my hole. I'm a good runner and a good jumper. I can clear fences high as my waist without touching them. It's easy to jump out my hole. I easily clear the dirt and snow piled around it. I land exactly right. My bayonet is pointed at his back. I have the butt of my M1 braced against my right side, but I'm about two feet short for a full thrust. I want to stab him in the back and dive back into my hole, where I won't be such a good target. It isn't working that way. I make a short hop to be sure I can put the full strength of my arms and shoulders behind my thrust. He is about to shoot Riley at point blank range. He must have caught my movement out of the corner of his eye. He turns toward me. I hit him just below his breast, and between the two of us, we drive the bayonet in to the hilt. I step back but the bayonet doesn't pull free. My feet are slipping in the snow! Teetering on the edge of panic, I lean back as the ChiCom

drops his rifle and reaches for the bayonet with both hands. I pull the trigger. The bayonet comes free with the rifle's recoil. I drop to the ground. After looking at him long enough to be sure he's dead, I roll over in the snow and slide into my hole.

Whatever rank is being cut down; it must be the one the attackers decide is enough. One more grenade from me and they're out of range of my arm. We keep firing as long as we can see their dark forms moving on the snow. I no longer have the feeling that it isn't quite sporting to kill the enemy after he breaks off the action. The mortars put another curtain of steel between the survivors and the safety of the river bed.

14November1950

Morning arrives in a mist of snow that hasn't yet covered the bloody field and hillside. It isn't all Chinese blood. The medics work on our wounded. Two of my new men get their million dollar wounds. I don't begrudge them a bit. That brings us back down to 10.

We stay pretty close to our holes until the mist lifts and we can see that there are no living Chinese between us and the river.

Riley helps me drag the bayoneted Red down the hill. We move quite a few who got frighteningly close to our positions. Next time they may break through!

We begin checking the enemy dead to see if there might be some useful information on them. A guy from the 2nd Platoon finds a dead Commie with a canvas roll over his shoulder that is stuffed with syringes full of some kind of liquid. We find another corpse with a roll full of balls of cooked rice. We can't decide if he was a corporal or a cook. Several jokes about the usefulness of corporals are batted around.

The jokes don't mask our fear of what those syringes might mean. The mail clerk brings back a rumor from headquarters that the needles were full of a drug to make the Chinese soldiers unafraid. Could be! They keep on marching into our guns until they are called off. It gives me the shivers to think they aren't afraid of dying. I am, and my fear gets stronger every day!

I've given up on Thanksgiving in Tokyo, or anywhere else, except the "Frozen Chosen".

We are always cold. When it rains, we are cold and wet.

16November1950

Yesterday afternoon it started to rain. We set up a perimeter along a stretch of road. Foxholes weren't as deep as they should be, but we were tired and wet.

As I sit alone in my hole. I shiver and shiver, until my strength is gone. Suddenly I realize my body is longer moving. I have no dry clothes, there is no place to go to warm my body. I wonder what is going to happen. It really makes no difference. I don't have the strength to stand anyway. I'll survive and stand up in the morning to ride a truck or tank to another hill, or I will freeze to death tonight.

I survive, and sure enough, we board trucks and move to another hill.

We've been given some winter coats and heavy cotton overpants to cover our wool trousers. We also have shoepacs. Everybody calls them Mickey Mouse boots. They're well named. Fine time to get these when I almost froze last night. I'm glad we got these, but they won't help if we are wet. On the bright side, we should stay much warmer in these when we are dry.

17November1950

Some evenings we get what is supposed to be a hot meal. But unless we happen to meet the mess crew on the road where they are cooking, and get our meal right then, the food we eat is always cold. If they carry it to us on a hill it's nearly frozen.

Speaking of food; this has been one windy, wet day. The convoy has stopped in a small village. We've been allowed to dismount. As usual, we don't know how long we'll be here.

Before all of us are off the truck, Whirlwind is out of sight, doing his usual scouting.

In a few minutes he is back. He says he has a way to get us some food, real food. He has found a North Korean farmer who is heading south to get away from the Chinese. The farmer has an ox that was injured by a mortar round. The farmer kept moving, but now the ox is dying. Whirlwind has offered to put the animal down and cut him up for some of the meat.

For some reason the old man has agreed to it, but he isn't too much of a hayseed. He demands two packs of cigarettes to boot. Of course we agree. I have one full pack to donate myself.

All Whirlwind wants us to do is delay the convoy if it starts up before he gets back.

He empties his knapsack on the ground. I use his ditty bag to put the stuff in.

The rest of the story of the poor old ox goes like this: Everything is going along perfectly. Whirlwind cuts the ox's throat. As a safety measure for getting our portion of the bargain, he cuts a big piece off the rump, and deposits it in his knapsack. He is getting along well with

the skinning The column begins to move out before the skinning and cutting is complete. To hold up it up, I keep telling our driver to wait. I'm missing a man.

Whirlwind comes loping around the corner, trying to wipe off his big hunting knife on the leg of his new cotton overpants. If we didn't know better, we might think Whirlwind has tangled with a mortar round.

Was that ever a good trade! We had twenty pounds, or more of "prime beef." We were also the envy of King Company.

The weather is cold, so the meat keeps fairly well. Whirlwind is taking care of it. The very next time we have a fire he finishes skinning our prime beef, and sears it all over to keep it from drying out. Every time we stop long enough to start a fire, we open his pack, and slice off a steak for each man in the squad, share and share alike. As a good will gesture to our "head honcho," we invite Lieutenant Hopkins to join us.

Now and then one of the boys complains about the green stuff growing on his steak, but he always scrapes it off and eats it anyway. Most of our fires are fueled with gasoline, but after a couple of steaks, we hardly notice. We haven't gotten fat, but it sure feels good to be close to full once in a while.

That meat was so good, I don't believe any of it was wasted, or even traded away.

I receive a letter from Laura. She says she is definitely pregnant. She has mentioned the possibility before, but now she is sure. I've spread the news all through the company. I can't stop talking and thinking about it. Now I've got to keep on my toes! I'm determined

to make it out of this mess. I can't let myself get so low I lose the drive to live; like when I nearly froze in the rain. I can't do some fool thing and get shot, or let myself be captured. But I know that there are so many things I can't control. I've got to keep on being as careful as I can!

After one firefight, we moved southwest on a road we're keeping open. We are supposedly shortening our lines. I guess that's true because that night we dug in on a hill near a road and we could see another outfit on the hills on our right and left flanks. It helps for the company to not be on a hill alone in the snow with nothing but Chinese for company.

According to Lieutenant Hopkins, the communist officers throw what they think is an overwhelming force against a portion of a line or a hill perimeter. They continue to pour men into the firefight until they overwhelm the outnumbered GIs, or until their brass is convinced they can't break through at that particular place. Then they redeploy to the right or left and try again on another sector of our line, or another hill. This is repeated until they find a weak spot. They use up a lot of men, but they are almost always victorious, eventually. He says the reason they pull back after a couple of days of heavy fighting; is to replace their casualties.

King Company must be doing something right. The enemy has broken through our perimeter, but we haven't been overrun yet.

The figures we see in newspapers, of how many Chinese are attacking the GIs, don't mean a thing. If a company of Americans, British, or Turks are attacked by a division of Chinese -we're talking 2,000 maybe 4,000

ChiComs against less than 200 UN troops- there is no way our men can kill enough of the enemy to survive. All the troops a mile down the road, or a couple of mountains away are useless to the troops under attack.

The lieutenant also told us that very few of the 600 men in the 3rd Battalion, 8th Cav. Regt. made it out of Unsan.

If we have the chance and the sun is giving off a little heat, we sit around and talk. I think we're trying to absorb some warmth from the sun and a little courage from each other. The old hands, the men who have been here since summer, sometimes gather by themselves. The worst of that is, there's usually fewer of us each time.

19November1950

A couple of days ago we lost contact with the enemy. The Communists have disappeared into the snow covered mountains and forests. I guess they're waiting for reinforcements. Fresh blood for another offensive!

Lieutenant Hopkins has assigned me to take a patrol of five men and move up a creek bed at least one mile or until we make contact with the enemy. We can be pretty sure we won't contact any friendly troops. If we make contact, we are to break off and return to the perimeter as quickly as possible.

Several other patrols are going in the same general direction, but we'll be too far apart to keep in contact.

Hopkins tells me to take my squad ammo bearers and one man from another squad, leaving my Bazooka and machine gun teams to cover our part of the perimeter.

I would love to take Riley or Whirlwind. But you don't openly disobey a lieutenant's orders, even on the front line. I choose to take only GIs. I have no confidence in the South Koreans.

A contact patrol isn't necessarily a suicide mission, but I'm already feeling low, and I have no idea how the new men will act. Most of the kids going on this patrol have been in the line a month, or less. None of them have been on patrol before.

We stay on alert in our holes until 0600.

We gather just inside the perimeter. I take time to tell them, "Keep your interval! If I motion to stop, stop and find a place to hide! Don't fire or do anything unless I do! Got it? Keep quiet"

That isn't all I want to tell them, but there isn't time

for more.

I decide we'll be quieter walking slowly in a column five yards apart, than if we move one man at a time and rush from one place of cover to another.

The snow is covered with ice crystals and the sounds of our footsteps bouncing off the banks of the creek is like breaking glass.

One kid, Collins, is walking in a crouch, but he still has his rifle slung over his shoulder. His hole mate, Harris, is so scared, he's shaking. I can't fault him for that. I walk backward to them without stopping the patrol. I motion for Collins to hold his weapon at the ready, port arms, and lay my hand on Harris' shoulder on my way back to the front of the column. God, I can't be Daddy to these guys! I'm less than a year older than any of them.

Daylight is almost two hours away, but we can see fairly well. There are large trees and bushes growing in the creek bed, and plenty of large rocks, and logs for cover.

We are so few that having flankers out would spread us all over the map. I wouldn't have any control at all. I wouldn't be able to keep the flankers from moving ahead of us, or falling behind. I decide not to have a point scout, either. It's a dangerous place to be, and I don't trust any of the kids with me to know what to do, so I take the lead. Protecting these green kids from what they are going to have to learn some day, is going to get me killed yet.

The wind picks up soon after we leave the perimeter. Everything around us starts moving and making noise! The pine trees sigh like someone taking a last breath. Tree limbs creak like rusty hinges. The ice and snow crackles like an army is moving across it. Ice crystals hiss as they

blow off the top of the creek bank, into our faces. There is no way to tell which are sounds caused by the wind, and sounds possibly made by the enemy.

My nerves tighten as we get farther away from the company. Everyone is jittery.

As we try to make a minimum of noise, we are literally walking on tip toes. Someone is always tripping. Mickey Mouse boots aren't made for precise moves on ice or snow. One of the boys tries to keep from coughing, and the explosion of air is louder than the cough would have been. Another sniffles rather than wipe his nose on his frost crusted sleeve. Twigs snap. Cartidge belts squeak. Surely the enemy can hear us if they are within a quarter mile.

I move slowly; stopping every few yards to listen. I take a step or two up on the side of the creek bank to look over the woods around us. Every time I do, I turn around and hold up my hand making a V sign to show that everything is alright. It seems to help. Collins is doing the same thing on the other side of the creek. Maybe he'll catch on, if he lives long enough.

Voices from around a bend in the creek bed float to me on the wind. As I sweep my hand from over my head toward the ground, everyone dives for cover.

This is it! There are at least a couple of Reds coming down the creek. I can hear them. No telling how many more are on the bank. If we're lucky we can get the jump on the Chinks around the bend, and race back to the company. If not, we'll bring a crowd of ChiComs down on our heads, and we may be wiped out in seconds.

I hear a sound again. It sounds like someone crying.

Someone else is whispering. I motion for everybody to stay where they are. Reaching into my pocket, I take a grenade, and pull the pin. I know just where I want to put it; right in the middle of the curve so the first one or two Chinese will be hit in the back and whoever is around the bend gets some of the shrapnel, too. Snow crunches as they move toward us. I draw my arm back, and stop!

Two GIs stumble around the bend! I turn around and hiss to the patrol not to shoot. The GIs in front of us stagger as they realize who we are. The one nearest me falls on his knees and doubles over dropping his head to the snow. The second one is ready to shout, but one of my men walks up to him waving to get his attention, then hisses with a finger to his lips. A third man staggers into view. They start jabbering in whispers.

The third man puts his hands in his pockets. I can see he has no gloves. One hand comes out holding a large white radish. He smiles at the radish and throws it into the brush.

My whole body shakes as I put the pin back into the grenade handle. I'm sweating and shivering from the cold, and nerves. Everyone can see that I'm scared, but I don't care. The only way to survive is to be scared and to always have your every thought and nerve tuned to possible danger. Even that doesn't save everybody.

My biggest surprise in all this is that I didn't go ahead and throw the grenade. My nerves and muscles were wound up to do it. My total concentration was on throwing it right so we might get away.

I whisper and ask the soldiers who they are. They tell us they are from the 3rd Battalion of the 8th Cavalry

Regiment. They were told to get through the Chinese and back to our lines as best they could. They have been wandering in the mountains for days. They had nothing to eat except some corn and a couple of long white radishes.

They have no weapons or helmets. All they have is the clothes on their backs. None of my men have anything to eat so we offer them a drink of water.

The one kneeling in front of me keeps rocking and whimpering. I tap him on the shoulder, and signal for him to follow me.

I'm sure we haven't covered a mile, but I can imagine a hundred well armed Reds rushing down the creek in pursuit of our stragglers. I tell everyone to sit and take a break. I walk to the bend in the creek bank and look around the corner. I can't see or hear anyone in the creek bed or on the bank.

I figure we covered half a mile and our stragglers said they had been in the creek bed for several hours. That means unless they were being pursued, there shouldn't be any enemy soldiers in or near the creek for about a mile. Besides, I'm going to figure it's a more pressing duty to get these men safely back to our lines.

We walk rapidly back to the company, the snow crunching under our boots, and ice crystals hissing as they blow off the bank. No Reds have infiltrated behind us. We get back to our hill just after daybreak.

We turn the three men over to Lieutenant Hopkins, along with my oral report on the patrol. The Lieutenant seems satisfied with the way I conducted the patrol.

24November1950

We've been shuttled from a mountain, to a crossroad, to a village, to another mountain, trying to keep the Reds from making an end run around our right flank and retaking Pyongyang.

We pull into one village about full dark. It looks like this is going to be one of those nights in which we use the bar ditches for foxholes or we have to climb a hill in the dark.

It turns out to be a more pleasant evening than we expect. We end up sleeping in a bar ditch, but our bellies are full.

The mess crew for King Company is already in town and has our chow ready. We eat a hot meal, but as usual it isn't enough to give us all the energy we need to keep warm and do whatever else we are ordered to do.

Soon after we finish eating, a group of Turkish soldiers wander over to visit. They are big, mean looking guys, but as soon as they are given an American cigarette they pledge friendship for life. One of them speaks English, and during the course of the conversation candy is offered to them. They all seem to have a hollow sweet tooth. Between the cigarettes and the candy, they break into toothy grins and insist we visit their group. Their mess is only a couple of streets away, so we say all right.

As soon as we arrive they insist that we sample their chow. The chow line is still open. We're given mess kits and canteen cups. We are immediately jealous. Our kits are piled high with mashed potatoes and chunks of bread. Strong, hot, very sweet coffee is poured into our cups until they are full. Our new friends apologize that most of the food is gone.

While we are stuffing ourselves, the Turk who speaks English regales us with stories of their fighting abilities.

It's one of the few times since we left the states that my stomach has been completely full.

25November1950

It's afternoon and we're climbing another mountain. This one is completely covered with heavy brush and looms above us thin as a knife blade.

The only way to climb it is at the end, and even there the ridge is only wide enough for one man. It's so steep we have to use saplings for hand holds.

I'm having a tough time trying to carry my personal equipment and the two boxes of machine gun ammo I carry whenever possible. Just behind me is one of the young South Koreans assigned to my squad. He is also carrying two boxes of ammo.

The Koreans usually outdo us for stamina every time things get tough, and strength and endurance are the only things that get us through. For some reason this boy is really worn out. I reach back and take his boxes of ammo and tell him to rest a minute. He can catch up with me later. I tie the box handles to a towel and drape them around my neck. By the time I am halfway up the ridge I begin to tire. I'm determined we'll have this ammo if we need it. I stop and put my rifle across my back by its sling.

My body tries to rebel against the weight, but I won't let it. I drag in enough air to keep on. My lungs squeal in protest. This goes on and on. I am finally moving on determination alone. If I slip and fall, I won't be able to get up. Finally, I can see the top. There is no way to stop without stepping off the ridge to allow others to pass. I'll never get started again if I do that, so I keep pulling myself along.

As I get to the top, the world begins to spin. I pass out and fall, landing on top of the four boxes of machine

gun ammo. The guys carry me to our area and wait for me to come to. Several hours later I wake. I'm rolled in my sleeping bag and shelter half. I sleep again. My sleep is so deep I don't move through the night.

Next morning I can see what a strange mountain it really is. The ridge on top is as narrow as the end we had climbed.

When I wake, people are stepping over me to move along the ridge. No one has dug foxholes. Our machine gun is set up near by. The ridge is clogged with brush.

Before the sun has warmed us, we are leaving the mountain that nearly got the best of me.

I strip off my clothes to find out why my chest and abdomen hurt so much. There are several large bruises where I hit the corners of the ammo boxes as I collapsed.

It is several days before I can carry my own boxes of ammo again.

04December1950

All the fighting and killing, and we still can't stop the ChiComs. They have enough people to walk over us even while we're killing them. They all but wiped out the 8th Cavalry Regiment near Unsan, last month. Then the ChiComs nearly wiped out the 2nd Division a couple of days ago, near Kunu-ri.

It's early. A heavy frost has formed on everything.

We leave the hill north of a nameless village on the right flank of the Eighth Army. There are several roads that meet in this village. It is still dark.

For some reason it's a rapid move. Maybe G2 (intelligence) decided we better get out of here or get cut off, too. My squad and a few men from another squad are aboard the last truck in the convoy.

Lieutenant Hopkins orders us to set up the machine gun in the floor of the truck. If necessary the gunner can fire over the tailgate.

We've done this before, but it's never been needed. The tripod is in the way and easily tripped over.

As everything turns out we don't need it, but we come close.

As often happens in a convoy, the driver of the last truck has to pour on the gas now and then, just to keep up with the other trucks.

As we roar through an intersection, someone yells. "Horses! Hey, they're ridin' horses!"

Sure enough! Soon after we pass the intersection, a dozen or so Chinese come charging out of a side road onto the road we're on. They're riding ponies! These strange looking men whip their mounts in an attempt to

chase us, but of course they can't begin to match our speed. Whirlwind gets off one burst with the machine gun before our truck whips around a curve in the road, leaving the Chinese cavalry far behind.

We could have been in a hairy situation, but Chinese cavalry whipping those stubby ponies, in an attempt to catch us, looked downright comical.

We get to laughing, and can't quit until we collapse onto each other in the middle of the truck bed.

Someone yells between cackles, "If I...If I had known they were bringing their ponies,...Ha,Ha, I...I would have brought m...m...mine!"

The uncontrollable laughter and pounding on the back starts again. We really need this!

We don't find much to laugh about in this sad, frozen land, but this makes a fantastic story we tell over and over to the rest of the platoon and the company.

We find out that what we saw wasn't a mirage. There is a full regiment of Chinese cavalry sweeping south with the armies that are hoping to trap us in the mountains.

No one seems to know what is going to happen next.

We had a Thanksgiving meal on the holiday. It was a good meal, but I didn't enjoy it, much. We took turns eating dinner. Half the company walked about a half mile behind our lines to get our dinner. Then we had to hurry back and relieve the other half of our men.

As we left Pyongyang, fires could be seen everywhere. Food, ammo, and other supplies were put to the torch. We weren't given a chance to take any of it with us.

I guess that would have taken too long.

The roads are packed with refugees; all heading south. It seems the citizens of this enlightened communist country would rather die of the cold or starvation, while taking this slim chance for freedom, than to spend the rest of their lives as slaves. Do these poor souls even know how far it is to South Korea?

I wonder about the little girl in Pyongyang. Has her family decided to make a break for freedom? I can't imagine the old woman making it.

What a lousy war!

We ride day after day toward the south, leap frogging through other units. Most nights we stop, set up a perimeter across the road, or on one side. Units north of us move through the next day. We mount up and move again. We make the refugees stay outside of our perimeter; no exceptions.

20December1950

We stop short of crossing the Parallel.

We set up on one hill and another, waiting for the ChiComs to catch up with us.

The whole battalion is here. It's good to visit the men on the hills around us. Going to battalion headquarters on an errand is a treat. We have time to speak with men in other companies. There are still some of us "originals," the men of the old 3rd Battalion.

It's cold, deadly cold. We can't have fires most of the time, so we spend much of the day wrapped in our sleeping bags. Several times a day, Lieutenant Hopkins checks to see that the squad leaders are making everybody change socks at least twice a day. Insisting that everyone change socks, forces each man to get out of his hole and his sleeping bag. That way no one sleeps or dozes long enough to freeze. A few of the men are already getting so sluggish, they have to be ordered out of their sacks. They will even claim they can change their socks while still in their sleeping bags. I'm tired of demanding obedience!

The lieutenant is also checking weapons for cleanliness and oiling. We have to be careful not to put too much oil on our weapons. In this cold the oil congeals and will actually keep weapons from working. It's better to oil several times a day and wipe the excess off each time, leaving a very thin film.

23December1950

When we are on the move we often crawl into our sleeping bags. We can safely do it on trucks, but are taking our life in our hands if we try it riding tanks. We come close to freezing with the temperature dipping below zero and our tanks and trucks traveling 30 or 40 mile per hour.

During the night I have someone wake me up every time the guard changes. There are nights we have fifty per cent alert. Once in a while that's reduced to twenty-five per cent. That's only one man awake in each pair of holes. I have a hole to myself. Nobody likes to be wakened every two hours, but I get up and go to every man in the squad, making sure he is awake. That way I know that no man in my squad is freezing to death. It's a thankless job.

We could be putting ourselves in danger if the Chinese catch us out of our holes in the middle of the night. It's a chance we have to take. We're in greater danger from the cold than from the ChiComs. It feels so good to nod off every chance we get. No one is getting enough sleep.

Last week we moved even farther south. We have a much better situation, but we all know we will eventually have to face up to more human wave attacks by the Chinese. The only way we can win is to bring so much fire power to bear in front of the units under attack that the enemy will quit or be wiped out.

This is the first time we have set up our MLR (Main Line of Resistance) on a large plain. I don't know all the units here in this plain, just south of a series of some very rugged mountains. It has to be at least the entire 5th Cavalry Regiment.

Instead of our holes being one line facing the

enemy, we have several ranks of holes. If the first rank can't hold, we can withdraw to join up with men behind us.

Behind the riflemen and the machine gunners we have mortars; 60mm company mortars. Behind them are 81mm battalion mortars. Scattered behind our holes are tanks, and behind them the artillery.

This is the first time we have set up a defense with this kind of depth.

24December1950

Christmas is truly the time for miracles!

Our platoon doesn't have to be on the line tonight, and we have also been given the great luxury of sleeping in a house.

The Koreans have an ingenious way of heating their houses. They build a fire in an oven outside. The smoke and heat passes under the clay floor through a clay pipe, and up a chimney at the other end. A very small fire warms a whole squad of men.

Lieutenant Hopkins has somehow saved a bottle of whiskey. He invites all the squad leaders and their assistants into the house where he is staying. He apoligizes for not being able to invite the whole platoon.

I have a strong feeling of pride and gratitude for his willingness to treat us, still youngsters in the minds of most, like men, and his equals. I think we all feel that we are brothers, because of what we've suffered and what we've seen.

Lieutenant Hopkins pours a shot into our canteen cups. It really looks kind of ridiculous; about 2 ounces of whiskey in the bottom of our quart size cups. No feeling of being underprivileged here! We're as proud as if we were drinking from antique silver cups in an exclusive men's club.

The lieutenant proposes a toast. "Here's to our mothers and fathers, our wives and our children, to those who got 'em and those who ain't, but wish they had." He pauses, then adds, "Here's to us! Here's to victory!"

Kind of a feel good toast, but that's what we're here for. We need some Christmas cheer.

To cap off this warm glow of a special evening, Lieutenant Hopkins reads a letter he has from Lieutenant Brown. Hopkins and Brown were classmates at West Point. Lieutenant Brown says he is doing well. Doctors saved his leg. The doctors decided that maggots eating the dead flesh of his wounds, almost certainly saved his leg, and possibly his life, from gangrene.

Lieutenant Brown writes that he thought I was KIA on Hill 174.

My tears flow as I think about that terrible day, and the mistake I made on Hill 174. I can't tell Lieutenant Hopkins about it. Then I wonder. Would either of us have gotten off that hill if I had tried to take him with me?

There's just too much to think about, and too much to be sorry for. I don't think any of us can bear to think about all of it. Not now! Maybe not ever.

28December1950

It seems that there are a few more gifts left for us this Christmas.

We had a traditional dinner for the Christmas holiday. The food was hot, and there was plenty of it. Also, we didn't have to stuff our food down and rush back to our holes. As you can imagine, not everything was perfect. It snowed most of the day. We don't feel the same about snow anymore.

The next day, 26December1950, brought with it another miracle. We got another shower. That's two showers in 4 months; more than anybody has a right to expect.

The temperature was hovering close to zero, but we didn't mind.

In the clothes tent, I got a full change of uniform. I also found a brand new pair of jump boots in a pile of Mickey Mouse boots. They are a size too big for me; giving me room for two pairs of socks. I don't know if I'll be told to get rid of them, but until I am told, I'll keep them. Mickey Mouse boots rub my feet raw. There's too much room inside them. My feet sweat so bad, they are wet all the time. I still have some problem with the Korean Crud. My legs feel better, and my feet stay drier in leather

It's a few days after Christmas, the squad is detailed to man an outpost several miles up a narrow winding valley north of the regiment's positions. The valley, and the road that winds through it is the main route from the north, to the plain we have been living on the last few days.

The whole squad is taken in several jeeps up the

valley to a bend in the road. Another quarter mile up the valley is another sharp bend. That is where our enemy will appear. The valley is narrow enough for us to see any advance scouts moving on foot.

High on the slope of a mountain, there are several well dug and straw-lined holes. We set up our crew-serve weapons in them. Ike and his assistant take the lowest hole where he has a good view of the road, and a low angle shot with his Bazooka. The machine gun has a pretty good field of fire, too, though it's higher up. The rest of us use the the other holes. We, as usual are only guards for the crew-serve weapons teams.

We are required to stay here for twenty four hours. A land line connects us to regiment.

Our mission is simple. As soon as we see the enemy coming down the valley, we are to report to regiment, make contact, and then bug out to our lines. Actually we are the warning bell. Making contact with the enemy is going to start trouble for us.

The tactic is a good one. Bringing the enemy column under fire from an unknown number of troops, especially in a narrow canyon, should cause them to deploy to find the enemy's positions.

Once we fire, we are going to have a hard time making it back to the company, unless we can disappear quickly. I figure our best bet is to go over the top of the mountain and try to make our way back to regiment from there; out of sight of the enemy. If we try to travel the road on foot, we will likely be caught by fire from the enemy forward elements. We could even be run down by the Chinese calvary we made fun of a couple of weeks

ago.

Over the mountain would take us out of sight sooner, and maybe we can make it back to the company without being seen.

The valley is empty except for us. The sky is clear and the temperature is dropping. The wind is whistling through the boulders and brush. We can't hear another sound, but there are artillery flashes to the northwest. We are so alone! I wonder if God even knows we are here.

We don't even try to have a guard schedule. When the men facing the wind feel their faces begin to freeze, they ask someone to relieve them. I can't tell that anyone is taking advantage of the rest of us.

We are so cold that we have to force ourselves to get out of our sleeping bags every two hours. We end up swearing at each other, but it has to be done.

We didn't have to offer ourselves up as sacrifice for the regiment. Nothing happened on our watch at the valley outpost.

04January1951

The Chinese started their New Year offensive several days ago. For some reason, unknown to us at the bottom of the regimental information ladder, our battalion was taken, lock, stock, and winter underwear, to a mountain pass southeast of Seoul.

Lieutenant Hopkins, one of our few sources of information, says our mission is to guard the road which runs through the pass. It is one of the major supply routes to the front. Our mission is to hold the road and pass against any guerilla bands or Chinese infiltrators who might try to close it.

I don't know what the elevation is, but I'm certain these are the highest mountains we have been on. The evening we arrived at the summit of the pass, the temperature, as registered on a large thermometer attached to a jeep, was minus 42 degrees F.

Our squad's holes face a jumble of peaks and canyons. The bottom of the canyon we face is many hundreds of feet below us. We can't see any roads or any houses. The snow is so deep we will have to find the trails through the valleys and on the sides of the mountains by accidentally stepping onto them.

Day after day we tramp through waist high drifts of snow, or slip and slide on ice. We try to move around the pass, in a way that keeps our presence a random thing, so the guerillas won't know where we might be next.

At the start of a patrol, we leave the perimeter, with orders to go a certain distance in a different direction than the last patrol. Some platoon size patrols continue for two, even three days. We sleep where we are when dark

overtakes us. Lieutenant Hopkins decides where our positions will be. We simply burrow into snow drifts like rabbits and kick each other awake every two hours.

A constant northwest wind blows off the Yellow Sea. Snow falls every few days and the sun seldom breaks through the clouds. I don't know why we don't freeze to death.

It is the most exhausting work I've ever done. I would give a year's pay for my skis, or better yet, my weasel (over-snow vehicle). Food is brought to us regularly, but it isn't enough to maintain our strength and keep us warm.

We don't carry as much machine gun ammo on patrol as we did before. No one has that kind of strength. Each ammo bearer carries a box of machine gun ammo. We pass around the heaviest things, ammo, machine gun, tripod, to each member of the patrol, so we can drag ourselves, and help each other through the snow drifts.

Guarding the pass from our foxholes should be easier duty, but still all our energy and time is taken up with staying warm as possible, making sure no one sleeps too long, and that we always have enough men on guard. We are allowed to have small fires during the day if we are inside the perimeter. If we are on patrol, we have no warmth, except whatever comes from exerting ourselves as we use our bodies to plow through the snow. During the night we have to be sure no one freezes. If one man falls asleep during his watch, the whole squad may freeze to death.

While on patrol, we see very few people. They are

always at too great a distance to question them. We are smart enough to not be trigger happy, and shoot some poor refugee. We are getting frustrated, continually pushing ourselves through deep snow, with nothing to show for it, except hands and feet that are always cold, blisters on our feet, and exhaustion at the end of each patrol.

While one platoon or squad is out on patrol, the other platoons have to move into the roving platoon's holes and guard the perimeter. There is no rest. As soon as we return from a patrol, we have to take over guarding our section of the perimeter. Often the day after we return from patrol, we are assigned additional parts of the perimeter.

08February1951

We are on one of our squad-size patrols. All is quiet except for the noise we make puffing and wheezing, as we struggle through waist high snow.

Suddenly, one of the men sees an axis deer. Without saying a word he takes aim and fires. He misses, but in seconds we are all firing at it as if our lives depend on killing that lone deer. Kill it we do! When we finally quit shooting, he is riddled.

The first few shots are probably reflex. The continued firing, until I scream for all to cease fire, is some sort of need to shoot, maybe even kill something. I think killing that poor deer was our way of letting off steam. We discussed taking it back to the company to cook and eat. I nixed that by telling everyone we would probably get court martialed for firing our guns at something besides the enemy.

Things really seem to be falling apart!

We keep busy tending fires in small holes. We stand or squat above the gasoline fires to get as much heat as possible. There is no way to get rid of the grime and dirt ground into our bodies. It is impossible to keep the men at a high level of military competence. I'm afraid if Lieutenant Hopkins didn't stay on my back, I wouldn't keep after the squad.

My major activity, when we are inside the perimeter is griping at the men. I have to. I have to keep after them to keep their weapons clean and oiled. No matter how often I check weapons, one or more is dirty when Hopkins pulls an inspection. It is my job to see that the lazy man cleans his weapon. I also have to insist that the men let

me see them change their socks. Now that's fun, watching 10 men take their Mickey Mouse boots off, change their dirty socks for a dry pair of equally dirty socks, and check to see that they change the felt pad in their boots for dry ones. I love it!

I hate to take my clothes off. My wrists look like skin and bones, and my ribs are showing through my skin. I seldom wash my hands and face. Certainly I don't do it often enough. I don't shave because my face looks like raw meat when I finish.

Whirlwind has disappeared. We haven't seen him for days. He was missing one morning and no one has seen him since. He has gone off the mountain looking for liquor or a woman several times. I turned him in to the Lieutenant, but as far as I know Hopkins didn't say anything to Whirlwind or the CO.

Whirlwind is probably the smart one. It's not likely he'll be shot for desertion, but it is very likely he'll be sent to a nice warm stockade for a couple of years; maybe even to the States. I sometimes wish I had the guts to try it.

It's terrible to think about, but Whirlwind may be dead. There are so many ways he could die. He never told me if he found any Koreans on his nighttime wandering. I hope some GIs found him and he's safe.

10February1951

Tanner, and most of the other reservists who are assigned to our company as replacements, go around with their feelings on their sleeves. They don't think they should have been called back to active duty. They thought they were being smart by entering the reserves after WWII. In 20 years of weekend drills they could get time on retirement while staying at home. They got fooled! Truman recalled a bunch of them; officers and enlisted men.

I have two reservists in my squad. There are several others in the platoon. The one who doesn't give me and the other squad leaders any trouble is Sergeant Riley. Hopkins assigned him to be assistant machine gunner. When Whirlwind disappeared, Riley became gunner. He's a good man; older than me, with longer time in grade, but he never gives one bit of trouble to anybody. He's the kind of guy you can trust to do as he's told. Like Muriel Brown, a man you can trust to cover your back in a tight spot.

Tanner is lying in the hole at the machine gun emplacement. He isn't on guard, but since he's right there already, I tell him to stand guard for our sector while we go for chow. I tell him I'll send someone to relieve him as soon as one of us is finished eating. He isn't being singled out. Every squad leaves two men on guard during meals. Everyone in the squad hears me speak to Tanner as we pass him. While we are gone, Tanner leaves the gun emplacement and goes to sleep in his own hole.

While we are at chow, the Company Commander checks the perimeter, and finds the machine gun

unmanned. He unhitches it from its tripod, and takes it back to the company CP.

I send two of our squad back to relieve Tanner and the other man left on guard. The new guard doesn't find Tanner at the machine gun emplacement. All he finds is an empty tripod.

About that time I'm ordered to the company CP.

The CO doesn't ask me any questions. He begins chewing me up one side and down the other. He actually threatens me with a court martial. I know if I try to explain I will only make things worse. The CO knows he has me for a serious breach of security.

While he's working me over, I stand in a tight military brace, staring at his forehead, and give the standard military answer I learned in basic training. "No excuse, Sir! No excuse, Sir!" with emphasis on the Sir! It's the first time I have been individually chewed on like this since basic training. I've usually done the best I could. I have been reprimanded for not having my equipment exactly right, or for doing a poor job cleaning a latrine, and other misdemeanors, and rightly so. This is the first time I've been chewed out for someone else's breach of security and failure to perform a lawful order.

Our CO is a First Lieutenant. He is new to the company. He came out of regimental headquarters. I think he is using me to convince himself how undisciplined we sloppy, frontline troops are.

I take the chewing out and carry the machine gun back to the squad's sector.

I chew out Tanner. I get madder than I should. I let him see my temper and that I'm really upset. He says

nothing.

It's the first time I've thought about killing someone I know, since Bergstrom deserted us at Hill 174. Tanner has done what he meant to do. He got me into trouble. I guess it was payback for him being called up for duty in Korea. I'll have to watch him real close from now on.

I find I'm withdrawing into myself more every day. I want to lash out at someone or something. I'm tired, cold, dirty, and sick of war.

Nothing goes right. Someday we will still have to face the Chinese again. There seems to be no way out.

I have to keep on doing the best I can, because I have enough brains to know that's my best chance to make it back to Laura and our baby. She says she is all right, but I'm sure the strain on her is getting worse. She goes for weeks not knowing if I am alive or dead. The news doesn't help. All she hears is that the army is in retreat, units are being wiped out, and men are freezing to death.

It's usually too cold to write.

16February1951

The brave stand the 23rd Infantry Regiment made this week, here at Chipyong-ni, and our battalion hitting the ChiComs from the rear, broke the enemy ring around the town. Guys in the 23rd IR say they figured they were in the cavalry, Custer's cavalry, until they saw us coming. They were surrounded by five divisions of Chinese for several days. Their orders were to "hold at all cost." There wasn't anything else they could do. They turned back repeated human wave attacks for three days.

We came up from our mountain pass south of the Han River to break through to them.

A company of tanks leads the convoy. King Company is lucky this time, but the poor guys in Love Company get shafted, again. They are given the "honor" of riding the tanks for the charge through the ChiComs' lines to break into Chipyong-ni. We are to be their fire support. King Company and Item Company get in position on hills several miles south of the town.

We set up every weapon we have, to cover Love Company. The final miles into Chipyong-ni run through a narrow cut in the hills. As soon as the tanks and the truck are into the cut, hundreds of Chinese appear on both sides of the road. Some of them fire from the hills; others charge the tanks. All we can do is crouch in the snow and fire as fast as we can at the ChiComs on the hills above the tanks. Ike fires his Bazooka at Chinese pouring into the cut. Riley uses box after box of ammo trying to keep the Chinese away from the road. Our artillery and the 23rd guns blast the hills, but no one can give close support to the men on the tanks, for fear of hitting them.

Nothing works. Enemy fire sweeps most of Love Company off the tanks in minutes. Then more ChiComs swarm out of their holes near the road, hacking down the rest of the guys in hand to hand fighting. As GIs fall off the tanks, killed or wounded, they are beaten and hacked to death by Chinese. It's as if those men have been driven into a butcher shop, and the Chinese are the butchers. We watch in horror as the men of Love Company are cut down.

The tankers can't see what's happening to the men on the tanks. They know they are surrounded by Chinese, but they can't tell what's happening outside, on the ground around them. A few GIs are able to cling to the tanks and a few more manage to get back on the tanks or on the truck at the end of the convoy.

We fire as long as there is light and movement. There is no way to tell who is along the road and in the shadow-filled ditches. We stay on 100 per cent alert through the night. We have no holes, just scraped out hollows in the snow.

Our Battalion CO, Lt. Colonel Treacy, was on one of the tanks and no one knows what happened to him. He is another of the old hands. He was 3rd Battalion CO at Camp Carson.

17February1951

With the light of dawn we can see tan humps thickly scattered over the hills. Hundreds of them lay along the road. Almost all are Chinese, except for the dead of Love Company, scattered along the last few miles of road into Chipyong-ni.

Some ChiComs got close to us, but most were near the 23rd IR lines around Chipyong-ni.

About 15 guys from Love Company made it to Chipyong-ni or made it back to our lines in the dark.

How many times can one company's men and officers be wiped out? King company has been whittled down to about 50 of the original roster, but we've been luckier than Love Company since the beginning.

18February1951

We moved today to some higher hills southeast of the town. The Chinks could attack again at any time.

As we push through the knee-deep snow, we find ourselves stumbling over the bodies of Chinese soldiers butchered in every way possible, and then gently covered by a blanket of white. They've been bombed, napalmed, shot, some with tracers, and others torn apart by artillery shells. Not a few of the bodies are still burning; even under the snow.

Where are these guys coming from? G2 told us they didn't exist back in November. Then they decided we had captured a few volunteers from China. Now it seems there are enough of them to push us all the way back to Japan. I don't get it!

I'm having more trouble with the replacements. The green kids are always worrying about filling their bellies and getting warm. Ike and I are the only "old timers" left in our squad. Bates got promoted out. Now it's Ike and me, three KATUSA's, three green kids, and two reservists.

We've dug decent holes, considering the ground is frozen about 2 feet deep.

We're in our sacks and settled in for the night, by dark. We're on 50 per cent alert. I tell Sheffield, the man on guard in the hole closest to mine, to wake me when the guard changes. That way I can wake each man and be sure he checks his feet for frostbite.

Sometime before daylight, someone is stomping on my leg and yelling my rank and name.

I'm cradling my piece in my arms, like I always do.

It may take a second longer to get out of my sack, but my weapon is warm and clean and ready to use.

That stupid lieutenant will never know how close he came to dying this morning.

He yells for me to get out of my sleeping bag and wake up my men.

He threatens me with a court martial. Ha! What's he going to do to me? Put me in a nice warm stockade! Or maybe they'll shoot me! So what! It doesn't really make any difference whose bullet kills me.

The lieutenant is right, but he sure is stupid for waking me the way he did.

The whole platoon is asleep, not just my squad! That's almost a third of the perimeter! We're lucky we weren't all killed in our sleeping bags!

I try to explain to the lieutenant that the failure for my squad is my responsibility, but there were three other squads asleep, too. He just walks away while I'm talking.

I have no idea who is at fault so I move through the squad, kicking each man awake and throwing snow on everybody. If there are Chinks out there they know where we are now!

I see to it that no one gets anymore sleep!

We survived, no thanks to me, or the several men who went to sleep and endangered the whole company!

I wonder how many other guards fell asleep on post last night. It would be interesting to know how many officers lost sleep last night as they worried whether we would stay awake and keep them safe. Most of us have been awake three days, or more.

20February1951

As the usual early morning fog burns off, a tank pulls to a bend in the road just below our position. I guess the tank is about to make a recon patrol to the north.

Minutes after it pokes its big gun around the bend we hear the scream of a diving prop plane. The sound startles us, but we're used to low flying planes. We've never been attacked by enemy planes, except for a "bedcheck Charlie." Suddenly we hear an even higher pitched scream. Looking up we see that a Navy Corsair has released a bomb! It is right over us wobbling and slowly rotating, on its way to that tank. He misses us, and he misses the tank. In fact, the bomb lands in a rice field across the road, about 50 yards from the tank. Dirt and ice fly into the air. We hunker deep in our holes, hoping the pilot will see the ID panels on the tank or one of the others scattered on the hills, and in the town. We don't have one for our position.

The next sound we hear is "blue language" coming from the tank. A colonel, who is commanding the patrol, stands in the tank turret screaming into a radio microphone-presumably tuned to the aircraft's frequency-while he shakes his fist at the receding plane. I raise up from my shallow hole and watch as the colonel screams to the pilot, and the world, a detailed description of his ancestry, how good he is as a pilot, and the probable future of his career.

I'm hoping the plane will continue toward the north, but my heart jumps back to my throat as the Corsair makes a 180 degree turn. He's coming back at the

tank, and that puts him on a bee line over us! He is making a strafing run! Less than 100 yards separates us and the tank. If he toggles off another bomb, especially if it's napalm, we're dead. If the bomb misses, he still has machine guns to work us over.

His machine guns are punching up plumes of dirt and snow from the paddy. They are even spaced and fast approaching the tank.

Then the impossible happens. Somehow the pilot gets the message. The bullets stop plowing into the paddy. As he pulls up, he insolently waggles his wings and flies off, probably praying to the god of fighter pilots, especially dumb fighter pilots, that no one has gotten his tail number.

It's scary, but fun, too. It's about time someone else gets chewed out, besides me.

Being out on this point in front of our perimeter is scary, but it's a lot better than dragging corpses across these hills to be buried. Bull dozers are digging trenches as graves for the Chinese dead.

Our squad is on the smoothest, easiest climbing hill we've been on in a long time. Of course, that means the enemy will find it easy climbing, too. We do have a great field of fire in every direction for our machine gun and Ike's bazooka. We're the only squad on the hill, and badly exposed, but we've been in similar places.

There is no one to help us here. We're about 200 yards in front of the perimeter. We've got to stay awake tonight! A couple hours sleep every five days ought to be enough for anybody. When I get real sleepy I still rub tobacco juice in my eyes. Guaranteed to make you stay

awake.

I expect it's our turn to go on the offensive now. How long can we keep going?

The weather was bright this morning, but the sky is gray now and a bitterly cold north wind means a miserable night. Snow has lost all it's charm for me. I don't know how we survive this cold, and being wet most of the time.

I don't believe we've lost a single man by freezing to death; not in the Third Platoon anyway. Some of us have different degrees of frost bite, but not enough to be sent to the rear. I'm rid of the crud I had last summer, but now I'm fighting frost bite. Maybe I ought to freeze my feet. I could stand to lose a foot, to get home.

The Chinks have it worse than we do, but I can't feel sorry for them. Unhurt, they're my deadly enemy. Dead, I'm grateful I don't have to worry about them trying to kill me. I don't know if I even hate them anymore.

21 February 1951

We push off from Chipyong-ni, on the offensive. The mountain we climb is a short hike north of the town, and across a creek. We are praying we won't have to fight for this one.

Our sector of the mountain is shaped like the inside of a bowl. A narrow, winding trail directs us upward around the side of the bowl.

It's so hard to keep my mind on all the things I need to watch for; signals from the lieutenant, mines, trip wires on booby traps, Chinks in foxholes dug into the side of the mountain. All that, and taking care of my equipment; especially my own weapon. I have to keep an eye on the rest of the squad, too.

I'm in front of the squad, but that's no big deal today. We're not the point. That's one plus about being the weapons squad. We don't have to take the point very often. You live longer if you don't have to be point.

To top all this it's cold and it's raining.

Above all, I have to keep my eye on the prize; the next place I'm going to put my foot!

We're lucky. The mountain isn't heavily defended. We root a few Chinks out of their one-man holes. They give up what must have been a woodcutter's hut about two-thirds of the way up the mountain. We kill a few more as they flee up and over the top.

All this takes place to the music of battalion mortars and artillery.

The crest is a long narrow spine of rock. The other side of the mountain falls off into a maze of ridges and ravines. To the left, the mountain rises even higher. An

open wooded area covers the highest point. North of that is another ridge much like the one we are on. The trees are being chewed up by shrapnel from mortar and artillery shells. It's our stuff, but we keep pulling our heads in, like turtles. It's a built in reflex we've learned over time. No one makes fun of anybody about this. In fact it's likely another group of GIs will duck next time. Now and then a chunk of wood, rock, or shrapnel zips overhead.

We can't see anyone except GIs on the crest. Somebody checks out a bunker. Half a dozen bullets and a grenade through the opening, takes care of any Chinks who might be hiding inside.

It's well past noon. Climbing that bowl with it's switchbacks took a lot of time. Possible mines and booby traps slowed us down even more. Above all we're tired.

We spread out on our side of the mountain, using the narrow crest to protect us from the counterattack that is sure to come.

This mountain is tall enough to be important to us, and to the enemy. We can see several roads from the crest. The enemy has given up this mountain too easily. They're going to come back and hit us hard, or they are going to try to suck us into a trap somewhere out there in that maze of ridges.

Our rain soaked uniforms and equipment weigh us down. We don't put on our ponchos. It's just about impossible to fight in them. The rain and the cold, continue to sap our heat and our strength.

The Chinese make several half-hearted attempts to attack up the ridges. Most of the company is lined up

right on top of the crest where we can see down the forward slope and still be able to duck small arms fire.

It's like Russian roulette with dozens of men on each side. The men crazy enough to raise their heads to fire, either get to kill one or more guys on the other side, or they get their heads blown off. You have to take a chance sometime and raise your head. It's the only way to stay alive. Crazy, huh?

The fog is getting thicker. We are having trouble seeing the enemy. If we can keep them at a distance, their sniping won't be so effective. I lob a grenade into the thickest part of the fog just to keep them honest.

Now it's getting hairy! We can hear, and now and then, we see men sneaking up the ridges and ravines. It isn't really a firefight but we don't dare drop our guard or get careless. We keep trading occasional shots with the Chinks.

Off to our right-front someone sees a group of men with a machine gun moving toward us up one of the many ridges. Our CO, who is new to King Company, and new to combat, thinks the men are from Item Company. They are supposed to be on our right. He thinks they may have secured their sector of the mountain and are trying to make contact with us.

No matter what he thinks, the CO shouldn't have done what he did next.

He stands up and shouts into the rain and fog. "Are you men from Item Company?"

Those guys out there in the fog aren't new to combat! They know what to do! They disappear like ghosts.

If our CO had waited quietly, they would have

walked right up to us, and we would have bagged an enemy machine gun and crew, or we would have made contact with Item Company. A few minutes of waiting wouldn't have made any difference, except that the CO might still be alive.

In minutes we are receiving heavy fire from the right-front. Soon several machine guns are firing. Bullets ricochet off the rocks. We have our machine gun set up and firing. Between bursts we hear the enemy calling back and forth. That may be the strangest sound I've heard in combat. I guess not being familiar with their language, makes it seems so strange. The shouts of the Chinese and the Koreans, to each other, always end on a high note. The thickening fog adds to the eeriness of the situation.

They're getting ready to mount a serious counterattack.

The whole mountain erupts in gunfire. They know where we are, but we can't see them, except for occasional muzzle blasts. It's hard to play roulette for long. When chips of rock start to sting your cheeks, you duck no matter what.

I try to use my grenades sparingly. I throw them where I think I hear several voices. I don't know if I make a kill, but I do silence the shouting for a while.

I saw the CO drop to the ground after he had shouted and the first rounds came out of the fog.

Suddenly he stands up to full height. Drawing his .45, he looks up and down the ridge, raises his arm and screams. "Let's get the sons of _____!"

His words are cut off by the round that hits his forehead just below his helmet.

No one else jumps to his feet to join in a charge on the enemy. Even the green kids stay down. They must be watching the old hands after all. To run into that storm of lead without knowing where we are going, in this fog, would be suicide.

The mortar fire from our heavy weapons quit. Either the FO can't see to direct fire missions, or worse, he's dead. Even worse than that, they may be out of ammo.

We have no choice but to fire into the fog and hope we're killing enough Chinese to blunt their attack.

There is a break down in command as the CO is carried off the hill. It's getting dark. We are still in a blanket of fog and rain. There are few holes and we don't have time to dig any of our own. No ammo is coming from the rear. If we aren't resupplied before full dark we will have to withdraw or risk being overrun.

Our last orders were to take the mountain. We've done that. Without orders to withdraw we are supposed to hold where we are.

HQ doesn't like it when troops leave their last position without orders. It leaves blank places in the lines on their maps.

We are fast approaching the need for a decision. Should we meet the enemy as he comes over the ridge, our bayonets fixed for a last stand, or should we try to get back to our last perimeter? Without orders, to withdraw, that's a "Bugout."

Finally, we are saving what ammo we have for the enemy's final rush to the top of the mountain. It will then end with bayonets and rifle butts.

We have a few advantages. We hold the high ground. The Chinese can't use their machine guns for the final assault, but we can use ours. If they use their usual tactics and put the greatest number of men at what they think is a weak spot, they may overrun us. I check my few grenades, and fix my bayonet.

Our Company Exec Officer (XO) shows up from the rear; like the cavalry, just in time. He's in command of the company now. In minutes he has enough information to make a decision.

No last stand tonight! He orders about eight of us to stay on the ridge with him. We are given all of the ammo from the rest of the men. The crew-serve weapons are withdrawn with the company. There's no problem getting what's left of the company to obey the order to withdraw.

Those of us still on the mountain spread out on the crest, just barely in sight of each other. On the new CO's command we begin firing our ammo in a spread, yell to one another as if we're mounting an attack, and retreat from the crest of the mountain, to the head of the trail we climbed earlier.

Before leaving the mountaintop, I run along just below the military crest, jerking fragmentation grenades out of my gas mask pouch. I give a quick pull on the safety pin, release the handle, and flip it over the top. I use a tactic that the North Koreans and Chinese have used on us. I saturate a good part of the mountain with grenades. As long as they land on the other side of the crest they'll roll down on anyone near the top. It's a rare fool who will run through a curtain of grenade fragments. Maybe they'll

hesitate just long enough for us to do our own disappearing act in the fog.

We are still on the trail at full dark. We've given the mountain back to the enemy. Even when it's necessary, as it is now, it still hurts.

If they are close behind us, all they have to do is roll grenades down the mountain side, as I had done. They don't, and we drag ourselves off the mountain, down the rocky creek bed, to yesterday's company perimeter. We are all worn out, but relieved the new CO's idea worked.

No one was hit during the withdrawal, and we brought out all our wounded. I think our CO was the only man in King Company killed today.

I put on my poncho and sit in my hole, shivering. At first I can't stop. I'm tired from the climb, the fight for the ridge, and the rear guard action. My adrenaline has been pumping most of the day. Suddenly my body is still. It's happening again. I've used all my strength and can't shiver any more. It's frightening to know I ought to be shaking from the cold and wet, until my teeth chatter, yet I can't move. My poncho and helmet are coated with ice.

Tomorrow's orders come, along with a supply of ammo. We will mount the same attack in the morning.

I haven't eaten and have no desire to.

I ask Riley to wake me every time he goes on guard. He is to get me to my feet no matter what he has to do.

He does what I ask. I am able to drag myself to my feet every two hours through a very short night. While I'm on my feet, I also make the men get out of their sacks so we know no one is freezing.

Making so much noise during the night may seem foolhardy. Actually it's less dangerous than allowing the men to sleep and to slip into unconsciousness, and finally to freeze to death.

It's going to be hard just to reclimb that mountain. The only advantage is that we'll know where we're going. On the other hand, the enemy can be pretty sure we'll be back, and he probably has his mortars zeroed in on the trail, the hut, and the bunker. If they want to keep the mountain, they will probably reinforce the survivors of today's attack.

22February1951

As we climb the side of the bowl one more time, company mortars begin peppering the ridge. There are a few Chinks, but no more than the day before. Maybe the attack is better coordinated with Item Company today. Most of the enemy leave the ridge before we come into sight.

We gain the first part of our objective with one small difference. When we reach the bunker someone throws a grenade in, same as yesterday. Four or five of us are standing around ready to make the final rush to the ridge. We are standing several yards apart. That's what probably saves our lives.

The grenade thrown into the bunker comes flying back out and explodes in the middle of our group! Before I can move, something slams into my chest. My rifle flies out of my hand as I go on a wild slide, on my back, through the mud, until I crash into a tree. Ike slides down the hill to me. Blood is streaming down his right hand.

I hear several shots. Someone is finishing off the Chink in the bunker.

"Hofsiss, you hit? Ike yells.

I point at his bloody hand and yell back, "You're hit! Get out of here!"

He ignores me and begins searching my clothes for a wound. We can't find a hole or any blood.

"My chest hurts! Must've been a rock." I rub my chest as I start uphill to get my M1.

I try to decide what I'm going to say as a parting shot at Ike. We've thrown so much sarcasm and ridicule at each other for 2 years, surely I'll be able to pitch a great

parting shot at my friend. Part of our fun has always been to get one up on each other; like hiding Laura's picture.

Then I hear him puffing behind me. I turn around and scream as loud as I can. "Get off this hill! Find a medic and get out of here!"

Tears come to my eyes as I realize I've just screamed an order to my friend. It's the first time I've ever given him an order! God help me! What is happening to me?

Ike hands his bazooka to his assistant. I can't think of anything else to say. I watch his back as he slides downhill. His blood is soaking into the sleeve of my jacket.

I'm tired, so tired. Now there is only me and Brown. The odds are finally catching up with us. Brown and I are last of the six.

We didn't talk much about the guys who are gone. We cried as their names were read at the battalion memorial service in Pyongyang, that's about all. A big part of Ike died when we lost Geraghty and Malool. He hasn't been the same happy kid he was at Carson.

Some of the wounded come back. Some of them have already been wounded a second time. They bring back news of the horrible things that happened to some of the guys. Some lost legs. A few died in hospital. Sgt Krause has gone mad from a head wound he received when we attacked Hill 174. They put a plate in his head. That hill chewed up the whole 3rd Battalion.

I haven't tried to make friends with the rest of the squad since Pyongyang. Several of the originals were wounded, and two have been promoted out of the squad because they were survivors, like Brown and me. Sgt. Riley, our gunner is a nice enough guy. But I don't know

him well at all. He's a reservist, called to active duty,and assigned to the squad less than three months ago. The other reservists are always doing petty things, making my life miserable. I guess they don't like answering to a fuzz-faced kid like me.

Well, I have more to worry about than a couple of "sad sacks".

The enemy sacrifices only a few men to slow our advance to the crest of the mountain. The mountain looks clean as the weapons squad reaches the top.

The rain is still falling and freezing. We are wet and tired again. The last two weeks are catching up with us. We have had very little sleep and not much food.

I've been speculating. Maybe the ChiComs couldn't recover from the beating they took at Chipyong-ni. Rumor has it that the body count runs into the thousands. We didn't count the bodies we saw last week, but the rumored count could even be low. The 32nd Infantry Regiment lost about 50 KIA.

If we can just spend a few days on this mountain to dry out -if it ever quits raining- and get some hot chow, we might be ready to make a big push.

A hot shower would be nice. I haven't had one since Christmas. I can dream can't I? It's strange how our dreams change. I'm down to wishing to be warm and clean and full, same as our green replacements.

The 3rd Platoon is assigned to secure the left flank of the mountain as we advance this afternoon. We manuever to the left, and the reserve platoon is to come up and fill in our sector. They will have to slide into the ridges and gullies on the forward slope, to root out any diehards

of the enemy. Our objective, the far point of the mountain, is a bit uphill, and curves to the north until it drops off to another ridge.

We lay below the crest waiting for the signal to advance.

I reach into my jacket pocket for my C-ration. I traded a can of beans and franks for my favorite, spaghetti and meat sauce. It's best when the top of the can has been pierced and set on some hot coals for a few minutes. No fires here. Not even a hot tank engine.

The can feels sticky. It can't be! I hold the can in my hand and shake with anger. I roar my anger! Everyone near me laughes at the sight of me holding up that can dribbling spaghetti and meat sauce. A large piece of shrapnel from the grenade has torn the can apart. Most of the contents lays in my trembling hand. The rest is in my filthy pocket. Hard as I try, I can't salvage any of it.

Now I am wet and tired, cold and hungry, and mad.

We take most of the afternoon to scour the woods on the high point of the mountain. The enemy is gone. We have the whole mountain to ourselves. From the northern point of the ridge we can see for several miles. A road heading north is less than a half mile away, directly under our guns.

The platoon is ordered to set up a perimeter on the north point of the mountain. Lieutenant Hopkins allows me to pick my own spot for the machine gun. There are several sharp ridges to our front. They fall away toward a creek. There's a good field of fire for the machine gun, but the gullies are filled with brush and could give cover to quite a few men willing to crawl on their bellies to reach

an objective.

I'm standing guard while the squad digs their two-man holes. This hill isn't going to be any better or worse than 100 others. The rain has quit. The north wind is drying us out and draining the heat from our bodies again. I look toward the north, at the endless ridges we will fight over tomorrow, and the next day, and on, maybe forever.

I squat next to the machine gun and light my pipe. I'm alone. The magic of Ike, Brown, and me is over. We scraped through for 6 months. There were dozens of times one of us could have been killed; like so many others. We always seem to barely make it. My body is a mess but the gooks didn't lay a mark on us, until today.

When the point system starts, Ike will have more points than me, now that he's been wounded. Brown and I will have the same points. Won't it be great if Brown and I get to leave together. Ike may be lucky and not have to come back at all. Wouldn't that be fantastic!

Ike didn't look like he's hurt too bad. But who am I going to talk to now? I wish I had told him goodby.

Brown is still okay. He gets along with his assistant. I see him every once in awhile. I worry about the odds catching up with him, too.

There have been a few times when I felt totally alone; the first night after our try at Hill 174, and the morning I led the patrol with five scared kids toward the Chink lines. Now I'll have to go on alone all the time.

It's the middle of the afternoon when I start my hole. I put myself just back of, and to one side of the machine gun hole, like I usually do. I hack at about six inches of frozen earth, before I hit rock. I keep widening

the hole looking for an edge to the rock.

The first enemy mortar shell lands below us, on the forward slope. After they drop a couple more around us, they fire for effect. These are big mortars, maybe 120mm, and several of them are zeroed in on our part of the mountain. There is no way to count the shells. The roar of the explosions and the whiz of flying shrapnel are continuous. I roll over the crest and slide a little way down the reverse slope. I dig some more. I can't run around looking for a hole big enough for me and whoever is already in it. I can't run and start a Bugout. It's tough chopping at the frozen ground, as I crouch in a tight ball, but I try. The shells fall with a steady rythmn of screeches as they approach the ground, a blast as they explode, followed by the zip of shrapnel. Finally, I pull my arms and legs under me and make like a turtle. I grit my teeth, ball my hands into fists and will the shells away from me.

A shell lands a few feet above me. The blast lifts me out of my shallow hole and slams me face down on the ground. I look around. Several men of our company mortar squad yell to me. What did they say? I raise to a kneeling position on one knee, shaking my head to throw off the concussion of the blasts.

I look up as someone yells, "Come on!"

My helmet! Where's my helmet? My glasses stayed on, but my helmet's gone!

Two shells explode. One to my left, the other to my right. I go down flat as sledge hammers hit both legs knocking them out from under me. I scream.

All I can do is raise up on my hands.

Something has burned its way through my gut. My

whole insides feel like they're on fire!

A warm stream is running down my chest. I clamp my hand over my neck. In the twilight I can see blood running through my fingers. I wonder how much of my neck is gone. I scream in pain!

I try to stand. Both legs crumble! I scream once more! The only answer I get is more blasts of noise and flying shrapnel. I almost pass out from the pain.

I can't see anyone. Everyone who has a hole is in it. There is no one to help me.

I figure I'm as good as dead. But until I'm sure, I have only one objective; to get to safety. If I'm going to die, it will be while I'm trying to get off this mountain!

I roll over on my stomach. I turn my legs one at a time. Another scream bursts from my throat. I know they are there, but I dare not look. The pain tells me better than my eyes could. I plant my elbows on either side of my head. I lever my body forward with my arms. I try not to scream. I know I have to save my energy if I'm going to make it off this mountain. The warm blood running down my chest and back is not a good sign.

It would be so easy to lie here. Maybe I could catch up on my sleep.

No! As long as I have a chance to get off this mountain and back to Laura, I've got to try!

I reach as far as I can, stick my elbows in the mud and pull. I don't know how far I've squirmed. Daylight is nearly gone. I raise my head enough to see where I'm going. I figure as long as I'm going downhill I can't go wrong.

Through the twilight and smoke, I see, directly in

front of me, someone squatting on the ground, leaning over another man. I squirm a little farther.

"Wait up pal!" he yells.

His voice is loud but calm. Here, in the middle of hell, is a medic! He has blood all over him. Obviously all, or most of it, is from someone else. Shell, after shell, after shell, shakes the ground and bangs on my ear drums. I'm sure one of those shells is going to get him, and me. Is there a place on this mountain that isn't covered with flying shrapnel?

"I'll help you in a minute!" he yells. He could be squatting in front of a camp fire offering me a cup of coffee. His head jerks down to his chest every time a shell lands close. That's the only attention he gives to the storm of shrapnel and the pounding noise.

"Like hell!" I scream. "I'm gettin' out of here!"

The gentle pressure of his hand on my back stops me for the moment. I whimper, but I wait. He yells something to the wounded man he's working on.

He turns to me, rolls me on my back, and squats over me. I scream again. It doesn't take him long to open 4 aid packets and to place them over the wounds he can find. I'm grateful for that, especially if I'm going to belly crawl all the way to the aid station.

It isn't quite dark yet, but his face inside his helmet is in shadow. I'm not surprised that I don't recognize his voice. Medics seldom last any longer on the line than a 2nd lieutenant, and they don't last long at all. I can hear his voice and feel his hands as he ties my bandages. He's calm and sure and doesn't seem at all afraid.

I marvel now at his bravery, even as I yelled then

for him to let me go so I could squirm on down the mountain. He tried to calm me by telling me that the stretcher bearers would show up soon. As he crawled off to help another man, I turned over on my belly, screamed as I turned my legs, and went back to squirming

That medic may well have saved my life, or at the very least, my sanity.

I don't know how much time passes. I make some progress. I'm in the trees now, but the shells follow me there. Some trees are still standing. They will soon be shattered by the Chinese mortars.

The next thing I see is a group of men, each carrying two cases of machine gun ammo. I guess at least two of them can't stand to see me crawling on my belly. They set their cases down and yell at the other ammunition bearers to come back for them. I don't recognize them either, but there has been quite a turnover in King Company, these last few months.

They lift me, put my arms around their shoulders, even as Ike and I had done with another GI, six months and a lifetime ago, on Hill 174. By way of thanks, I scream in their ears.

We make more progress this way, but I finally yell for them to stop. Every time either foot brushes against a rock or clod of dirt, it spins around, and my friends get another scream in their ears for their trouble. I can't go any farther. The pain is costing me more than my life is worth. One man stays with me while the other runs off.

In minutes, he's back with a wooden door from the wood-cutter's shack. Smart fellas!

They lay me on the door and carry me to the trail

cut into the side of the mountain. This is the second time for me to try to get off this mountain, and both times I haven't been sure that I'll reach the bottom alive. About half way down we meet several medics with a crew of stretcher bearers. They stop long enough to give me a shot of morphine and transfer me to a stretcher.

I don't have sense enough to thank any of those men; the medic or the ammo bearers. I can only hope that if they need the same kind of help, someone as brave as they are, will be there for them.

Before we reach the creek bed, my pain is almost bearable but I still hold the stretcher in a death grip. At this point I begin to think I might at least make it to the aid station.

I suddenly realize I'm cold; cold and wet. Ice is everywhere.

God, please don't let me freeze to death; not now!

One of the medics stays with me and another wounded man. He fills out a casualty tag for me and the man lying on a stretcher next to me.

In total darkness, we wait for a jeep. I can still hear the mortars and see the flashes from exploding shells flickering on the low hanging clouds. Finally, I hear the whine and rattle of a 4wheel drive in low gear as a jeep bounces along the rocky creek bed.

The medic and jeep driver strap me onto the jeep and put the other man next to me. He seems to be unconscious. In the flashlight's beam, I can see why. He's riddled with shrapnel from head to foot. There are wounds in his face and cuts all over his clothes. Blood is oozing from most of them. I can hear him wheezing. He

must have a punctured lung.

The jeep whines in low gear as we move down the creekbed. It rocks along, throwing us against the straps. I can't hear the other man wheezing anymore.

When we get to battalion aid in Chipyong-ni, medics unstrap the stretchers.

I ask, "How is he?"

I don't know my fellow passenger but we're buddies now; united by the blood we left on the stones of that creekbed and on that mountain.

"He didn't make it." A medic continues to unstrap my stretcher.

I wonder if I'm going to make it.

They carry me into a large heated tent. The men carrying my buddy pass the tent door and move on into the darkness.

I'm laid, stretcher and all, on a large wooden table. A man, a doctor I guess, checks my casualty tag and orders another shot of morphine for me.

The order for the morphine may have been given because of what happens next. Two GIs cut away the bandages my medic had put on. Then with large shears they begin cutting my clothes away. They move me as little as possible, but I can feel the pain through the morphine. A third GI checks my dog tags, and adds something to my casualty tag. I keep trying to stop them. The man with the tag tells me all my personal things will follow me to the hospital. Yeah, sure!

Then, they go too far! They put those shears to my boots! I've had them less than 2 months and they're still in good shape.

I threw my Mickey Mouse boots away when I spotted that pair of nearly new jump boots. I wore them with two pair of socks, through the coldest weather I have ever seen. As far as I know my feet aren't frozen.

I yell for them to stop.

"You aren't going to need these anymore." one man tells me as he pulls on the heel of my cut up boot.

Blood pours from my boots as he slings them aside. That scares me more. Are my legs that bad? I know they're still there because I scream every time someone touches them. I give up as pain rushes up from my legs again.

The next thing I know I'm bouncing along in an ambulance with four other guys. I'm still wearing my filthy winter undershirt and I'm covered with a blanket. I am wearing clean bandages. We reach a MASH unit sometime in the night. I'm put in a big tent again. I don't know where I am. It's probably Wonju or Yoju. At least I'm warmer. I'm lifted off the stretcher for the first time, and put on an operating table.

I stare at the bright light overhead until I'm forced to close my eyes. I can't understand what the doctor is saying.

24February1951

Sometime yesterday I was put on a litter bus. The hours all run together. We arrive at an Evacuation Hospital. I sleep.

This morning I am in a school building, on a stretcher again. I have no idea what was done to me on the operating table, but the pain is getting unbearable again. A nurse gives me a shot for pain. As I drift off I feel myself.

Most of my body is covered with large bandages. My legs are covered with cotton and bandages, all the way to my ankles. My left side hurts. It's covered with a large bandage, too. There's a bandage around my neck. It doesn't feel like any part of my neck or face is gone. I look under my sheet. I guess, except for some major slices in my neck, my legs, and side, I may be all right.

I don't know how long I've slept, but I waken as two men pick up my stretcher. The same nurse is walking beside me. They carry me to a helicopter pad. My stretcher is set on the brackets of a waiting helicopter.

Ducking beneath the whirling blades, a medic and the nurse begin to clamp me in. Suddenly the helicopter blade sucks the blanket right off me. I don't know if I say anything, but my first contact with an American woman in more than six months shouldn't be like this. All I have covering me is an undershirt crusted with blood and filth, and a few bandages, none of which cover the places that are causing my face to burn like fire, as my embarrassment grows with each passing second. The blanket is almost out of my reach when the nurse grabs it and pulls it down to be clamped under some straps.

Her grin is just broad enough to tell me, "I'm not laughing at you GI! Don't sweat it!"

She pats my shoulder, backs out from under the whirling blades, and waves.

I don't remember much of that flight.

The helicopter lands at an airstrip, right next to a C47. We take off soon after I'm transferred to the plane.

I landed in Korea surrounded by almost two hundred friends. In exactly six months, I lost most of them in that land of hate and killing.

26February1951

Surgery was performed on me in Tokyo. I woke up in a ward. A Purple Heart was on the table beside my bed.

A doctor just came by to check on me. He said he had removed a piece of grenade shrapnel from my chest. He said it almost reached my heart.

He spent a little time telling me what I was doing in a plaster cast from my chest to my ankles. My right knee is shattered. He thinks they got it put back together right. My left thigh bone is broken in two places. A chunk of metal had ripped into my side, through my intestines, and was found laying against my backbone, hence the precaution of a body cast. The shrapnel in my neck was to be left there. It was near the spine, too, but he thought it would soon be covered with calcium deposits, and should be alright. My feet are nearly frost bitten.

It sounds so simple, but the pain is almost unbearable. The doctor says if I need any pain medication, all I have to do is ask for it.

03March1951

I've been moved again. This time I'm in the Army Hospital, Fukuoka, Japan.

Sometime during one of my foggy periods, my body cast was split lengthwise. All of my wounds are still open and must be cleaned as a regular routine. The cleaning of my wounds is a show in itself. It seems that all of the shrapnel was so hot that it burned the skin as it made the wounds. When the top of the cast is removed, a large swab and antiseptic is used to clean the wound inside and out. Each day, burned and dead flesh is cut away from my side, and legs. I squeeze the metal rods at the head of my bed and grit my teeth to keep from screaming. The cast is tied back in place after a treatment to keep my broken legs and my backbone still.

I look at my wounds, but I can't do it for very long. The flesh around the hole in my chest is red and scabbed over. Though it came close to ending my life, that wound is healing. A doctor told me he could probably stitch the skin on my legs soon. More dead flesh will have to be cut from the hole in my side. There is a chance it may be large enough to need a skin graft.

Lying in the hospital, in a clean white bed, being watched over by nurses and nurse's aides in white uniforms, has solved many, but not all of my problems. Shortly after being deposited very gently in a bed, in this hospital, I thought my chances of living had improved greatly, except for the possibility that some medical complication, such as infection, or blood clots might appear.

From the time I was mauled by one, or possibly,

two mortar shells, plus a piece of grenade shrapnel, pain has taken over from the Chinese as my arch enemy. Every time I wake from an operation, after having been moved, or cleaned, much of my body is in extreme pain. The doctors, nurses and medics are doing their best for me. Whenever I ask for something to relieve my pain, it is given to me quickly.

Suddenly I develop a raging fever!

The fact that I have a serious infection doesn't surprise me. I've cleaned my teeth and my body only a few times in six months. Now I am treated to an injection of penicillin, every six hours. The shots are so painful that the nurses and I have developed a routine. I expose a different shoulder or buttock for each shot. The nurses try to help me remember, but it is up to me to keep track of which muscle has been stuck last. The shots are much more painful if two shots in a row are given in the same muscle. We visit both shoulders and both buttocks every day.

My feet aren't frozen, but they look like they've been boiled. They're cracked, and skin is coming off in large chunks. A Japanese nurse's aide helps keep me clean, and covers my feet and ankles with oil several times a day. I wonder how she can do what she does as the skin of my feet comes off in her hand.

07March1951

I wonder why trouble seems to follow me! I thought I had left all the horrors of war behind. That wasn't to be. Even as I lay several hundred miles removed from combat, and a couple of weeks into recuperating from my wounds, I'm attacked by one of our own men.

While the nurse's aide is rubbing oil into my feet, a GI who obviously thinks that he is "king of the ward," grabs the young woman by the arm and drags her toward his bed; all the while cursing and yelling that he wants "a back rub right now."

I make the mistake of shouting for him to let the girl go. The "king" turns his attention on me. He can't be very sick, for he grabs my arm and pulls me off the bed, body cast and all. I am helpless, tied in my cast like a turtle in a shell. He hits me only once before several medics grab him and hustle him out of the ward. Several other medics and a nurse pick me up like a beached whale and put me back in my bed. Being bounced around adds to my pain.

The nurse's aide was frightened, but she wasn't hurt.

The "king" never came back to the ward. Several days later an officer came by to ask me some questions. He said I would be needed as a witness when the GI who tried to hurt me and the nurse's aide, was court martialed for assault and battery.

10March1951

Pain continues to be my enemy. Demerol and the nurses who inject it into my pain-wracked body are my friends. For several weeks, I've been given a shot of pain killer every four hours, if I ask for it. The need for a shot comes at shorter and shorter periods of time. The doctor in charge of my treatment decides I am becoming addicted to the Demerol and orders that I am to be weaned off the drug. Even though I know I have to get off it, I begin pleading for a shot long before the prescribed waiting period is over. The nurses help me by giving me attention, especially when my body is undergoing a seige of severe pain. The head ward nurse sits up with me until fatigue put me to sleep around daybreak.

I finally get over the need for demerol with the help of the nurses and medics.

It seems as soon as one battle is won, another comes along to take its place. Now that I'm safe; the dangers of combat are past, and the infection in my wounds seems to be overcome, another enemy has invaded my sleep. I've begun to have nightmares!

There are some variations, but each one is much the same as the one before. Almost every night I dream I am back in Korea. At times there is a battle going on, or I am quietly sitting in my hole waiting for the enemy. Then I see, as if they are on parade, the faces of most of the men I know who have been killed. I see some of them more than once. I usually wake up screaming, or trying to scream, but I have no voice.

To make things worse, the doctor in charge of my case comes by to check on me every day. Every day he

reassures me. "Don't you worry, Hofsiss, you're going to be all right. We'll have you back with your company in no time."

Every day I think, "No! No! No! I love my buddies. I'm loyal to my company, but I don't want to go back to Korea! I want to go home!"

I don't have the guts to say it to the doctor, but I think it over and over every day. I pray about it every night. I came so close to dying on that frozen mountain. I don't think I can do it again. I'll go crazy. I don't want to die.

I write to Laura assuring her that I'm all right even though I have several holes in me, and two broken legs. For a time I write happily that I might be home before our child is born. I can't bring myself to tell her what the doctor is saying. As I had done over the months we've been apart, I write very little about what is actually happening to me and to those around me.

My mind jumps back and forth between thinking I'll go crazy if I'm sent back, and thinking there is no way they can send me back.

Most of the pieces of my right knee are back in place, but the cartilage and meniscus are gone. The fluids drained from my knee joint before I was off that mountain. I wonder how many miles I can go with no lubrication in my knee.

Once the infection is under control, the doctors make an attempt to suture the wounds in my legs and side. They are partially successful, but each wound reopens, exposing live tissue to the air.

' come to the conclusion, in spite of my doctor's

cheerful assurances that I'll be going "back to my company," that I will not. I come to that conclusion when my body cast is removed, and a new cast is put on my left leg. It isn't ready to bear my weight yet. The calf and thigh muscles of both legs are so atrophied they look like sticks. The muscles will have to be built up again. Another clue is that my right leg is stiff. It won't bend, not even a few degrees. I will spend weeks, if not months of more pain and work before I can flex my right leg.

10April1951

The cast is gone. Now the hard work begins.

First my leg is placed in a whirlpool-tub of hot water. That part of the treatment takes 30 minutes. Before my leg is completely dry, I hobble to a table. I sit with both knees at the edge of the table. Weights are hung from my right foot to begin forcing my leg to bend. As part of that same therapy I then lift weights to strengthen my atrophied muscles.

I wheel myself to the therapy room twice a day.

Again, pain is my constant companion.

I lift weights with my left leg also, even though it isn't as weak as my right leg.

The wound in my side is the only one open now. It will be kept moist until it closes naturally. I hope so. It's pretty ugly. The wounds in my legs have been closed with stitches.

30April1951

This morning the doctor came by to check up on me.

He asked me if I would like to go home. It's what I've been praying for!

I was pretty sure I wouldn't get home before our baby was born, but I was still hoping I wouldn't have to go back into the fighting.

For a few seconds I feel anger building in me. That's a pretty cruel joke. Especially since he should remember that the nurses told him I was expecting a child any day.

He smiles broadly and assures me it's no joke. He says there is a flight next week for walking wounded. I assure him I am. The nurse standing behind the doctor, gives me a questioning look. I look at her and nod while I smile. I don't remind him, that he hasn't advanced me from a wheel chair to crutches yet.

Once the doctor has left the ward, I rush to tell one of the nurses I need to be walking on crutches right away, or I won't be able to go home. In minutes I'm mounting a pair of brand new crutches, and two medics are helping me get used to them. Using crutches for the first time, increases the level of pain in both my legs, but I don't care.

I am actually going home!

My bandages are down to patches over my wounds. I only have to be careful not to bump the tender scars on my legs and side.

Shortly after the doctor leaves the ward, I have another terrible thought. I'm still a witness in a court martial for assault and battery. In fact, I am one of the

victims. Again my friends, the nurses come through for me. They locate the lieutenant who is prosecuting the court martial. They explain my impending fatherhood. He allows me to make a deposition and releases me from appearing at the court martial.

An officer from the finance division exchanges my military script for American greenbacks. That's when I know I'm going home!

My final medical chart, the one that will go on top of my hospital records, is finished.

I weigh 134 pounds. That's after 2 and 1/2 months of good chow and all the goodies I can eat. I wonder what I weighed when I came off the line?

I thank the nurses, medics, and the Japanese nurses aide.

10May1951

The flight to the States is long and tiring. We fly from an air base near Tokyo, to Midway Island. The plane is refueled while we eat a meal in the Navy mess hall.

Each patient has his own stretcher on the plane, but we are required to walk from the plane to the mess hall. I hobble slowly through the sand; American soil!

We arrive in Hawaii on the second afternoon of our trip. We stay overnight at Tripler Army Hospital. The last leg to the States is from Hawaii to Travis Air Force Base Hospital, California.

Within hours of being put to bed at Travis, I'm able to make a telephone call to Laura.

My heart is about to beat out of my chest as she comes to the phone. Having despaired of ever hearing her lovely voice again, I would like to listen to her for hours, but our time is limited.

I wonder what she thinks after talking to me for the first time in 9 months? Did I sound like the young man she fell in love with, or was she talking to a stranger?

Our son was born about the time I left Japan. Laura and our son, Duane, are well. I told her I was set for a flight to San Antonio and Fort Sam Houston Hospital the very next day.

At last, we said the words we had been waiting to say for months. "I love you! I love you!" I told her I would be with her as soon as I could.

17May1951

A week after I arrive at Fort Sam Houston, I am allowed a recuperation furlough. I ride a military bus to downtown San Antonio, hobble on my crutches to the bus depot, and wait for the bus to Fort Worth.

My bus to Fort Worth is announced. I move as best I can to the correct door. There's a large crowd already gathered around the bus. As the crowd surges toward the bus door, I try to move out of the way. I lean against the side of the bus to steady myself. I'm terrified of falling. I decide to move along the side of the bus, so I can lean against it if I lose my balance.

I'm wearing a new, starched, Class A summer uniform. I have my patches, ribbons, and CIB on my shirt.

Everything I need is in a small overnight bag.

For some reason the bus driver looks over the crowd before taking any tickets. He pushes his way through the crowd until he is standing in front of me. I know he can't tell from where he stood at the front of the bus, that I was on crutches. The only way I'm different from the rest of the crowd is my cap with its blue infantry piping. Perhaps he saw me inside the depot. Whatever his reason, he sweeps an opening through the crowd with his arms. Standing in front of me, he turns and sweeps the crowd aside again.

In a voice loud enough for everyone to hear, he says, "Here soldier, you go first!"

I make my stumbling way to the door and wait. The driver takes my ticket and holds my arm until I'm safely inside.

I am so grateful for what he has done; that he

acknowledged me for who I am, and perhaps for where I've been. I turn and give him a very inadequate, "Thank you!"

When we arrived in Fort Worth he steps down in front of me and holds my overnight bag while I move cautiously down the bus steps.

That bus driver will never know what his gesture did for a very sick, combat weary, soldier.

Less than two hours after arriving in Fort Worth where I'm met by my sister and brother-in-law, I hobble into Laura's arms.

I set my crutches aside and fold the woman I love in my arms. This is the woman who, in spirit, sat beside me in my foxhole, and kept me from losing my courage during the never ending attacks; the woman I thought of when I had to drag myself out of my sleeping bag, or freeze to death. The remembered smile of this woman brought with it the strength to climb a hundred mountains, and to live in the ground like an animal, without becoming one. The lovely image of this woman in my mind, gave me the will to crawl off that mountain top, when to stop, and lie still, would have been so easy, but would have meant my death.

Our love spanned the thousands of miles that separated us, and has overcome the terrible odds of six months of combat that destroyed most of the men of the original King Company. The love of this beautiful, courageous woman gave me the strength to continue when I was so afraid, I wanted to give up and shoot myself; when I was so tired that death would have been easier than taking the next step; when I was so terrified during mortar barrages

and firefights that I wanted to curl up in the corner of my foxhole and wait to die.

The worry, the fear that I might never see my Laura again, is past. We whisper the words we spoke to the wind a thousands times, hoping it would be carried around the world to our soulmate. Three words written over and over, in every letter, with tears, or sweat, or snowflakes for punctuation. " I love you! I love you! I love you!"

Before I lay down to rest, I'm introduced to our son. I missed arriving home for his birth, by twelve days. I worried from the time Laura had written that we were to have a child, that I might leave my bride a widow, and that my son would be fatherless before he was born. Instead, God saw fit to allow me to remain alive, though badly battered. To hold my wife and my son, is a long deferred dream come true.

Now, we can begin to heal!

We will probably be healing still, many years from now, but we will be doing it together!

19May1996 0556

Epilogue

I woke a few minutes ago, from a dream that will not let me return to a peaceful slumber. Part of it is fact from a past almost 45 years distant from this warm windy morning, with my loyal and constant Laura beside me in our bed, and the wind chimes on the porch playing an unsuccessful lullaby.

I am at the bus station in San Antonio, just as I had been in May, 1951. I am about to board the bus for Granbury. Going home!

I stand as tall as I can on my crutches. My khakis are clean and starched. The crease in my trousers, is perfect. I wear my overseas cap just right, at the usual jaunty angle. My ribbons and CIB make a splash of color over my left shirt pocket.

I've gained back most of my normal weight, but I'm already tired, and my journey back to life has only begun. My leg hurts. (As it hurts now, having wakened me for the fourth time this night.) I feel like an old man. (Even as I am old now.)

The bus driver steps down from his seat and prepares to receive tickets from the passengers. They push and crowd forward. I move backward along the side of the bus. I am unsure of my balance on crutches and wildly afraid of falling.

As the passengers push forward, the bus driver looks up. All he can see is my head and the Infantry Blue piping on my cap. He hasn't taken any tickets or allowed anyone to board the bus.

He is neither rough nor gentle as he raises his hands to push his way through the crowd to stand in front of me. He is a big man, but that may be because I need a big man.

A smile tugs at the corners of his mouth as he says, "Come on soldier, you go first."

I'm embarrassed and relieved, and I'm sure I won't fall with the driver behind me.

A girl comes and sits beside me. I don't know her age; nine, maybe ten.

She looks up at me with eyes of pure innocence. "What are those?" she asks.

I'm embarrassed again, but happy that she has noticed my CIB and my ribbons.

I begin a slow, whispered litany. "This is the Korean Campaign Ribbon. The stars are for each battle we fought. This one is from the president of South Korea, to thank us for coming to his country to help them fight the war. That's the ribbon for the Purple Heart. I was wounded and was given a medal for it."

"Is that why you're on crutches?"

"Yes. This is the CIB; the Combat Infantry Badge. This is given only to an infantryman who fights in the war."

My dream ends there, in a hot bus traveling north to the arms of the woman I love; who suffered as much as I did, and suffers with me still.

The bus, the uncaring passengers, and the wonderful man, the bus driver, were real. The curious little girl, was only part of my dream.

Post Script:

I still have nightmares and what the psychiatrists call "night terrors". Once in awhile I have a dream like the Epilogue above. Many of the experiences good and bad will stay with me until I die.

Laura and I were blessed with two more boys and two girls.

I went to college under the GI Bill, earned a masters degree, and taught 5th and 6th Grade children for 13 years. Then I developed and administered an outdoor learning program to teach the same grade of city children about nature and country life. After 7 years of that, I worked for the US Postal Service for 10 years.

Laura and I finally got our farm. Neither of us is capable of doing much physical labor anymore, but we enjoy living in the country, as we had planned from the very beginning.

I have had problems with my right knee and thigh since the day I was wounded. Over the years, I've had five surgeries on that leg, and still experience chronic pain.

Several pieces of shrapnel migrated close to the surface of my skin, and have been removed.

Ike got home okay. Laura and I went to see him in 1951. We had a nice visit with him and his family. We didn't see or hear from each other again until 1997. We talked on the phone, but didn't seem to connect with each other as we had in Korea.

Ike and I composed a letter to Malool's mother soon after he was killed. Laura wrote to her too. I'm afraid we were all carrying a pretty heavy load of pain, both physical and emotional. As with Ike and me, we quit writing to Mrs. Malool.

Several years ago I contacted a William M. Geraghty, in California. He said he was the record keeper for the Geraghty clan in America. He had Willie's name in the clan book, but didn't know he was dead. He thanked me for the information. He said in an email later, that he had tried to contact the part of his clan that lived in New Jersey. He wasn't successful.

Just months before sending this book to the printer, I found Corporal Muriel G. Brown listed as KIA on the Korean War Project database. He was killed a week after I was wounded.

All these years I had thought, or at least hoped, Brown had made it, and enjoyed a good life. I didn't remember where his home was, and had no idea how to contact him all these years.

Wouldn't you think, after all this time, I could look at my friend's name on a list without crying? I can't! Perhaps God kept it from me until I could handle it.

Brown was the best foxhole mate I could have asked for. He was always my trusted friend! I wish I had told him.

(Continued from inside front cover)

Ted: Read every page! Reawoke some memories I had buried long ago. It's not easy to tell people what combat is really like. You can't put it into words, and if you try they don't comprehend. Only we who have lived it can tell the story ... You have just done that. The story could not have been told better. You told every infantrymans tale . Thank you. C.R. Co A 27th RCT & 1st Cav. Div. 1950-1951

Mr. Ted Hofsiss, Thank you for your personnel account of the Korean War. After reading your account, I came to realize that after my time in the peace time Army, nothing could compare with actually being there. My father served in Vietnam, along with several of the soldiers I served with while in the army. They seldom spoke of Vietnam and now I understand why. Your efforts must have been extremely hard. Thanks again for your service.

Ted, I began reading your diary yesterday and was thoroughly impressed with the raw feelings that you expressed in telling the tale of combat in Korea. It was excellent reading. It's the same kind of emotion that my Uncle imparts when he speaks of his combat experience in WWII... G L. H

I came across this story and have enjoyed it. I... haven't heard much about this war and since I've come across this ... I can't believe what you went through. I hope you and other soldiers of this conflict band together and educate America on what really happened. Just reading your few pages has inspired me to look further into this conflict... so I can tell my children more about it. Your book should be a lesson for future youth.... A C

Waiting for the Blessed Light of Dawn

A Diary of the Korean War

by **Ted Hofsiss**

This is the story of men in war...

It is a story of love, friendships and combat.

It is a story of what the hell of combat does to men; to their bodies, and more significantly, to their minds and souls.

It tells of the kind of courage and devotion to duty and country that took these men halfway around the world, to fight for a people they did not know.

They were thrown into combat as boys. Days later they were hardened, cynical veterans, fighting to stay alive; owing primary allegiance to their units and each other.

They had to fight many enemies:

Fierce heat or deadly cold sapped their strength,

Fear dogged every footstep, trying to melt their courage and destroy their resolve,

There was never enough water, food, clothes, or sleep,

They defeated one army, only to be attacked by another many times the size of the first,

Death was always at their elbows, taking their brothers-in-arms one by one.

This is the Forgotten War.

Written by a man who lived it.

Waiting For The Blessed Light Of Dawn

A Diary of the Korean War

Ted Hoffess

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